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NEW YORK: ALFRED · A · KNOPF

PREJUDICES
SIXTH SERIES

By H. L. MENCKEN

PUBLISHED AT THE BORZOI · NEW YORK · BY
ALFRED · A · KNOPF

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PUBLISHED OCTOBER, 1927

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PREJUDICES

SIXTH SERIES

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I. JOURNALISM IN AMERICA

1

ONE of the agreeable spiritual phenomena of the great age in which we live is the soul-searching now going on among American journalists. Fifteen years ago, or even ten years ago, there was scarcely a sign of it. The working newspaper men of the Republic, of whom I have had the honor to be one since the last century, were then almost as complacent as so many Federal judges, movie magnates, or major-generals in the army. When they discussed their puissant craft at all, it was only to smack their chests proudly, boasting of their vast power in public matters, of their adamantine resistance to all the less tempting varieties of bribes, and of the fact that a politician of enlightened self-interest, giving them important but inaccurate news confidently, could rely upon them to mangle it beyond recognition before publishing it. I describe a sort of

Golden Age, and confess frankly that I can't do so without a certain yielding to emotion. Salaries had been going up since the dawn of the new century, and the journalist, however humble, was beginning to feel his oats. For the first time in history he was paid as well as the human cranes and steam-shovels slinging rolls of paper in the cellar. He began to own two hats, two suits of clothes, two pairs of shoes, two walking-sticks, even two belts. He ceased to feed horribly in one-arm lunch-rooms and began to dine in places with fumigated waitresses, some of a considerable pulchritude and amiability, and red-shaded table lamps. He was, as such things are reckoned, happy. But at the heart of his happiness, alas, there yet gnawed a canker-worm. One enemy remained in his world, unscotched and apparently unscotchable, to wit, the business manager. The business manager, at will, could send up a blue slip and order him fired. In the face of that menace from below-stairs his literary superiors were helpless, up to and including the editor-in-chief. All of them were under the hoof of the business manager, and all the business manager ever thought of was advertising. Let an advertiser complain that his honor had been impugned or his *clavi* abraded, and off went a head.

It was the great war for human freedom, I suspect and allege, that brought the journalist deliverance from that last and most abominable hazard: he was,

perhaps, one of the few real beneficiaries of all the carnage. As the struggle grew more savage on Flanders fields and business grew better and better at home, reporters of any capacity whatever got to be far too scarce to fire loosely. Moreover, the business manager, with copy pouring over his desk almost unsolicited, began to lose his old dread of advertisers, and then even some of his natural respect for them. It was a sellers' market, in journalism as in the pants business. Customers were no longer kissed; the lesser among them actually began to stand in line. The new spirit, so strange and so exhilarating, spread like a benign pestilence, and presently it began to invade even the editorial rooms. In almost every American city, large or small, some flabbergasted advertiser, his money in his hand, sweat pouring from him as if he had seen a ghost, was kicked out with spectacular ceremonies. All the principal papers, suddenly grown rich, began also to grow independent, virtuous, touchy, sniffish. No — — — — could dictate to them, God damn! So the old free reading notices of the Bon Marché and the Palais Royal disappeared, salaries continued to climb, and the liberated journalist, taking huge breaths of thrilling air, began to think of himself as a professional man.

Upon that cogitation he is still engaged, and all the weeklies that print the news of the craft are full of its fruits. He elects representatives and they meet in

lugubrious conclave to draw up codes of ethics. He begins to read books dealing with professional questions of other sorts—even books not dealing with professional questions. He changes his old cynical view of schools of journalism, and is lured, now and then, into lecturing in them himself. He no longer thinks of his calling as a business, like the haberdasher's or tallow chandler's, or as a game, like the stockbroker's or faro-dealer's, but as a profession, like the jurisconsult's or gynecologist's. His purpose is to set it on its legs as such—to inject plausible theories into its practise, and rid it of its old casualness and opportunism. He no longer sees it as a craft to be mastered in four days, and abandoned at the first sign of a better job. He begins to talk darkly of the long apprenticeship necessary to master its technic, of the wide information and sagacity needed to adorn it, of the high rewards that it offers—or may offer later on —to the man of true talent and devotion. Once he thought of himself, whenever he thought at all, as what Beethoven called a free artist—a gay adventurer careening down the charming highways of the world, the gutter ahead of him but ecstasy in his heart. Now he thinks of himself as a fellow of weight and responsibility, a beginning publicist and public man, sworn to the service of the born and unborn, heavy with duties to the Republic and to his profession.

In all this, I fear, there is some illusion, as there

always is in human thinking. The journalist can no more see himself realistically than a bishop can see himself realistically. He gilds and engauds the picture, unconsciously and irresistibly. For one thing, and a most important one, he is probably somewhat in error about his professional status. He remains, for all his dreams, a hired man—the owner downstairs, or even the business manager, though he doesn't do it very often now, is still free to demand his head—, and a hired man is not a professional man. The essence of a professional man is that he is answerable for his professional conduct only to his professional peers. A physician cannot be fired by any one, save when he has voluntarily converted himself into a jobholder; he is secure in his livelihood so long as he keeps his health, and can render service, or what they regard as service, to his patients. A lawyer is in the same boat. So is a dentist. So, even, is a horse-doctor. But a journalist still lingers in the twilight zone, along with the trained nurse, the embalmer, the rev. clergy and the great majority of engineers. He cannot sell his services directly to the consumer, but only to entrepreneurs, and so those entrepreneurs have the power of veto over all his soaring fancies. His codes of ethics are all right so long as they do not menace newspaper profits; the moment they do so the business manager, now quiescent, will begin to growl again. Nor has he the same freedom that the lawyers

and the physicians have when it comes to fixing his own compensation; what he faces is not a client but a boss. Above all, he is unable, as yet, to control admission to his craft. It is constantly recruited, on its lowest levels, from men who have little professional training or none at all, and some of these men master its chief mysteries very quickly. Thus even the most competent journalist faces at all times a severe competition, easily expanded at need, and cannot afford to be too saucy. When a managing editor is fired there is always another one waiting to take his place, but there is seldom another place waiting for the managing editor.

All these things plainly diminish the autonomy of the journalist, and hamper his effort to lift his trade to professional rank and dignity. When he talks of codes of ethics, indeed, he only too often falls into mere tall talk, for he cannot enforce the rules he so solemnly draws up—that is, in the face of dissent from above. Nevertheless, his discussion of the subject is still not wholly absurd, for there remain plenty of rules that he *can* enforce, and I incline to think that there are more of them than of the other kind. Most of the evils that continue to beset American journalism to-day, in truth, are not due to the rascality of owners nor even to the Kiwanian bombast of business managers, but simply and solely to the stupidity, cowardice and Philistinism of working newspaper

men. The majority of them, in almost every American city, are still ignoramuses, and proud of it. All the knowledge that they pack into their brains is, in every reasonable cultural sense, useless; it is the sort of knowledge that belongs, not to a professional man, but to a police captain, a railway mail-clerk, or a board-boy in a brokerage house. It is a mass of trivialities and puerilities; to recite it would be to make even a barber beg for mercy. What is missing from it, in brief, is everything worth knowing—everything that enters into the common knowledge of educated men. There are managing editors in the United States, and scores of them, who have never heard of Kant or Johannes Müller and never read the Constitution of the United States; there are city editors who do not know what a symphony is, or a streptococcus, or the Statute of Frauds; there are reporters by the thousand who could not pass the entrance examination for Harvard or Tuskegee, or even Yale. It is this vast and militant ignorance, this wide-spread and fathomless prejudice against intelligence, that makes American journalism so pathetically feeble and vulgar, and so generally disreputable. A man with so little intellectual enterprise that, dealing with news daily, he can go through life without taking in any news that is worth knowing—such a man, you may be sure, is lacking in professional dignity quite as much as he is lacking in curiosity. The delicate thing called honor

can never be a function of stupidity. If it belongs to those men who are genuinely professional men, it belongs to them because they have lifted themselves to the plane of a true aristocracy, in learning as well as in liberty—because they have deliberately and successfully separated themselves from the great masses of men, to whom learning is an insult and liberty an agony. The journalists, in seeking to acquire that status, put the cart before the horse.

2

The facts that I here set forth are well known to every American newspaper man who rises above the ice-wagon driver level, and in those sad conferences which mark every gathering of the craft they do not go undiscussed. Even the American Society of Newspaper Editors, *i. e.*, of those journalists who have got into golf clubs and become minor Babbitts, has dealt with them at some of its annual pow-wows, albeit very gingerly and with many uneasy glances behind the door. But in general journalism suffers from a lack of alert and competent professional criticism; its slaves, afflicted by a natural inferiority complex, discountenance free speaking as a sort of treason; I have myself been damned as a public enemy for calling attention, ever and anon, to the intolerable incompetence and quackery of all save a small minority

of the Washington correspondents. This struthion fear of the light is surely not to be noted in any of the actual professions. The medical men, in their trade journals, criticise one another frankly and sharply, and so do the lawyers in theirs: the latter, indeed, are not above taking occasional hacks at the very judges, their lawful fathers and patterns of grace. As for the clergy, every one knows that they devote a large part of their professional energy to refuting and damning their brethren, and that not a few of them do it on public stumps, with the laity invited. So, also, in the fine arts. It is impossible for an architect to affront humanity with a blotch without hearing from other architects, and it is impossible for a poet to print anything at all without tasting the clubs of other poets. Even dramatists, movie actors, chiropractors and politicians criticise one another, and so keep themselves on tiptoe. But not journalists. If a Heywood Broun is exasperated into telling the truth about the manhandling of a Snyder trial, or a Walter Lippmann exposes the imbecility of the Russian "news" in a New York *Times,* or an Oswald Garrison Villard turns his searchlight on a Boston *Herald* or a Washington *Star,* it is a rarity and an indecorum. The organs of the craft—and there are journals for journalists, just as there are doctors for doctors—are all filled with bilge borrowed from Rotary and Kiwanis. Reading them, one gathers the impression that every news-

paper proprietor in the United States is a distinguished public figure, and every circulation manager a wizard. The editorial boys, it appears, never fall down on their jobs; they are not only geniuses, but also heroes. Some time ago, having read all such journals assiduously for years, I stopped my subscriptions to them. I found that I preferred the clipsheet of the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals.

But if there is thus little or no frank and open discussion of the evils that beset journalism in the Republic, there is a great deal of private discontent and soul-searching, and it shows itself in all the fantastic codes of ethics that issue from embattled professors of journalism in the great rolling-mills of learning, and from editorial associations in the cow States. In such codes, I am sorry to have to repeat, I take no stock. Most of them are the handiwork of journalists of no professional importance whatever, and, what is worse, of no apparent sense. They run the scale from metaphysical principia worthy of Rotary to sets of rules fit only for the government of a Y. M. C. A. lamasery or a State's prison. They concern themselves furiously with abuses which are not peculiar to journalism but run through the whole of American life, and they are delicately silent about abuses that are wholly journalistic, and could be remedied quickly and without the slightest difficulty. Their purpose, I

believe, is largely rhetorical. They give a certain ease and comfort to the laboring patient without letting any of his blood. Nevertheless, I am glad to see them multiply, for though most of them may be hollow today, there is always a chance that some solid substance may get into them to-morrow. If they accomplish nothing else at the moment, they at least accustom the journalist to the notion that his craft needs an overhauling. His old romantic optimism oozes out of him. He is no longer quite happy. Out of his rising discomforts, I believe, there will issue eventually a more realistic attitude toward the problems that confront him, and on some bright day in the future he may address himself rationally to the hard business of solving them. Most of them, I believe, are clearly soluble. More, most of them can be solved by working newspaper men, without any help from experts in ethics. What they call for is not any transcendental gift for righteousness, but simply ordinary professional competence and common sense.

For example, the problem of false news. How does so much of it get into the American newspapers, even the good ones? Is it because journalists, as a class, are habitual liars, and prefer what is not true to what is true? I don't think it is. Rather, it is because journalists are, in the main, extremely stupid, sentimental and credulous fellows—because nothing is easier than to fool them—because the majority of them lack

the sharp intelligence that the proper discharge of their duties demands. The New York *Times* did not print all its famous blather and balderdash about Russia because the Hon. Mr. Ochs desired to deceive his customers, or because his slaves were in the pay of Russian reactionaries, but simply and solely because his slaves, facing the elemental professional problem of distinguishing between true news and false, turned out to be incompetent. All around the borders of Russia sat propagandists hired to fool them. In many cases, I have no doubt, they detected that purpose, and foiled it; we only know what they printed, not what they threw into their wastebaskets. But in many other cases they succumbed easily, and even ridiculously, and the result was the vast mass of puerile rubbish that Mr. Lippmann later made a show of. In other words, the editors of the American newspaper most brilliantly distinguished above its fellows for its news-gathering enterprise turned out to be unequal to a job of news-gathering presenting special but surely not insuperable difficulties. It was not an ethical failure, but a purely technical failure. And so was the same eminent newspaper's idiotic misreporting of the news from China in the early part of 1927, and the grotesque paralysis of the whole American press in the face of the Miami hurricane in 1926.

Obviously, the way to diminish such failures in future is not to adopt sonorous platitudes borrowed

from the realtors, the morticians, the sanitary plumbers and Kiwanis, but to undertake an overhauling of the faulty technic, and of the incompetent personnel responsible for it. This overhauling, of course, will take some intelligence, but I don't think it will make demands that are impossible. The bootlegging, legal or delicatessen professions, confronted by like demands, would quickly furnish the talent necessary to meet them; I see no reason why the profession of journalism should not measure up as well. What lies in the way of it is simply the profound, maudlin sentimentality of the average American journalist—his ingenuous and almost automatic belief in everything that comes to him in writing. One would think that his daily experience with the written word would make him suspicious of it; he himself, in fact, believes fondly that he is proof against it. But the truth is that he swallows it far more often than he rejects it, and that his most eager swallowing is done in the face of the plainest evidence of its falsity. Let it come in by telegraph, and his mouth flies open. Let it come in by telegraph *from a press association* and down it goes at once. I do not say, of course, that *all* press association news is thus swallowed by news editors. When the means are readily at hand, he often attempts to check it, and sometimes even rejects it. But when such checking presents difficulties—in other words, when deceit is especially easy, and hence

should be guarded most vigilantly—he succumbs nine times out of ten, and without a struggle. It was precisely by this process that the editors of the *Times*, otherwise men of extraordinary professional alertness, were victimized by the Russian "news" that made that paper ridiculous. In the face of great improbabilities, they interpreted their inability to dispose of them as a license to accept them as truth. Journalism will be a sounder and more dignified profession when a directly contrary interpretation of the journalist's duty prevails. There will then be less news in the papers, but it will at least have the merit of being true.

Nor is the typical American journalist's credulity confined to such canards and roorbacks from far places. He is often victimized just as easily at home, despite his lofty belief that he is superior to the wiles of press agents. The plain fact is that most of the stuff he prints now emanates from press agents, and that his machinery for scrutinizing it is lamentably defective. True enough, the bold, gay liars employed by theatrical managers and opera singers no longer fool him as they used to; he has grown so suspicious of them that he often turns them out when they have real news. But what of the press agents of such organizations as the Red Cross, the Prohibition Unit, the Near-East Relief, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, the Department of Justice, the Y. M.

C. A., and the various bands of professional patriots? I do not say that the press agents of such bodies are always or necessarily liars; all I say is that, nine times out of ten, their statements are accepted as true by the newspapers without any attempt to determine accurately whether they are true or not. They may be simple statements of plain fact; they may, on the contrary, conceal highly dubious purposes, of organizations and individuals. In both cases they are set forth in the same way—solemnly and without comment. Who, ordinarily, would believe a Prohibition agent? Perhaps a Federal judge in his robes of office and full of seized evidence; I can think of no one else. Yet the American newspapers are filled every day with the dreadful boasts and threats of such frauds: it is set before the people, not as lies, but as news. What is the purpose of such rubbish? Its purpose, obviously, is to make it appear that the authors are actually enforcing Prohibition—in other words, to make them secure in their jobs. Every newspaper man in America knows that Prohibition is not being enforced—and yet it is rarely that an American newspaper comes out in these days without a gaudy story on its first page, rehearsing all the old lies under new and blacker headlines.

I do not argue here, of course, that only demonstrable facts are news. There are times and occasions when rumor is almost as important as the truth—

when a newspaper's duty to its readers requires it to tell them not only what has happened, but also what is reported, what is threatened, what is merely said. What I contend is simply that such quasi-news, such half-baked and still dubious news, should be printed for exactly what it is—that it ought to be clearly differentiated from news that, by an overwhelming probability, is true. That differentiation is made easily and as a matter of course by most European newspapers of any dignity. When they print a dispatch from the Russian border they indicate its source, and not infrequently follow it with a cynical comment. If they had Prohibition agents on their hands, they would print the fulminations of those gentlemen in the same way—with plain warnings to stop, look and listen. In brief, they make every reasonable effort to make up for their own technical limitations as news-gatherers—they do the best they can, and say so frankly when it is not very good. I believe that American newspapers might imitate them profitably. If it were done, then the public's justifiable distrust of all newspapers, now rising, would tend to ebb. They would have to throw off their present affectation of omniscience, but they would gain a new repute for honesty and candor; they would begin to seem more reliable when they failed than they now seem when they succeed. The scheme I propose would cost nothing; on the contrary, it would probably save ex-

pense. It would throw no unbearable burden upon the journalistic mind; it would simply make it more cautious and alert. Best of it, it would increase the dignity of journalism without resort to flapdoodlish and unenforceable codes of ethics, by Mush out of Tosh.

3

In their private communions, though seldom in public, the more conscientious and unhappy variety of journalists commonly blame the woes of the craft upon the entrance into newspaper ownership of such opulent vacuums as Cyrus H. K. Curtis and the late Frank A. Munsey. As a result of the application of chain-store methods to journalism by these amiable Vandals there are fewer papers than there used to be, and the individual journalist is less important. All the multitudinous Hearst papers are substantially identical, and so are all the Scripps-Howard papers, and all the Curtis papers, and so were the Munsey papers in the great days of that pathetic man. There is little room, on the papers of such chains, for the young man who aspires to shine. Two-thirds of their contents are produced in great factories, and what remains is chiefly a highly standardized bilge. In the early days of Hearst, when he had only a few widely-scattered papers, his staffs were manned by men of great professional enterprise and cunning, and some

of them became celebrated in the craft, and even generally. But now a Hearst paper, however inflammatory, is no more than a single unit in a long row of filling-stations, and so it tends to attract only the duller and less picturesque sort of men. There is scarcely a Hearst managing editor to-day who amounts to anything professionally, or is heard of outside his own dung-hill. The platitudes of Brisbane and Dr. Frank Crane serve as pabulum for all of them. What they think is what the machines at the central factory think; what they do is determined by men they have never seen. So with the Scripps-Howard slaves, and the slaves of Cox, and those of Curtis, and all the rest. Their predecessors of a generation ago were gaudy adventurers, experimenters, artists; they themselves are golf-players, which is to say, blanks. They are well paid, but effectively knee-haltered. The rewards of their trade used to come in freedom, opportunity, the incomparable delights of self-expression; now they come in money.

But the sweet goes with the bitter. The newspapers of to-day, though they may be as rigidly standardized as Uneeda biscuits, are at least solvent: they are no longer the paltry freebooters that they used to be. A Munsey, perhaps, is a jackass, but he is at least honest; no one seriously alleges that his papers are for sale; even the sinister Wall Street powers that Liberals see in the background must get what they want out

of him by being polite to him, not by simply sending him orders. The old-timers, contemplating the ghastly spectacle of a New York *Sun* submerged in the Munsey swamp and an *Evening Post* descending from a Villard to a Curtis, forget conveniently how bad most of the papers they once worked for really were. In the town where I began there were five papers, and four of them were cheap, trashy, stupid and corrupt. They all played politics for what there was in it, and leaped obscenely every time an advertiser blew his nose. Every other American city of that era was full of such papers—dreadful little rags, venal, vulnerable and vile. Not a few of them made great pretensions, and were accepted by a naïve public as organs of the enlightenment. To-day, I believe, such journalistic street-walkers are very rare. The consolidations that every old-timer deplores have accomplished at least one good thing: they have got the newspapers, in the main, out of the hands of needy men. When orders come from a Curtis or a Munsey to-day the man who gets them, though he may regard them as ill-advised and even as idiotic, is seldom in any doubt as to their good faith. He may execute them without feeling that he has been made an unwilling party to an ignominious barter. He is not condemned daily to acts whose true purpose he would not dare to put into words, even to himself. His predecessor, I believe, often suffered that dismaying necessity: he seldom

had any illusions about the *bona fides* of his boss. It took the whole force of his characteristic sentimentality to make him believe in his paper, and not infrequently even that sentimentality was impotent without the aid of ethyl alcohol.

Thus there is something to be said for the new newspaper Babbitts, as reluctant as every self-respecting journalist must be to say it. And in what is commonly said against them there is not infrequently a certain palpable exaggeration and injustice. Are they responsible for the imbecile editorial policies of their papers, for the grotesque lathering of such mountebanks as Coolidge and Mellon, for the general smugness and lack of intellectual enterprise that pervades American journalism? Perhaps they are. But do they issue orders that their papers shall be printed in blowsy, clumsy English? That they shall stand against every decent thing, and in favor of everything that is meretricious and ignoble? That they shall wallow in trivialities, and manhandle important news? That their view of learning shall be that of a bartender? Has any newspaper proprietor ever issued orders that the funeral orgies of a Harding should be described in the language of a Tennessee revival? Or that helpless men, with the mob against them, should be pursued without fairness, decency or sense? I doubt it. I doubt, even, that the Babbitts turned Greeleys are responsible, in the last analysis, for the political rub-

bish that fills their papers—the preposterous anointing of Coolidge, the craven yielding to such sinister forces as the Ku Klux Klan and the Anti-Saloon League, the incessant, humorless, degrading hymning of all sorts of rogues and charlatans. The average newspaper proprietor, I suspect, gets nine-tenths of his political ideas from his own men. In other words, he is such an ass that he believes political reporters, and especially his own political reporters. They have, he fancies, wide and confidential sources of information: their wisdom is a function of their prestige as his agents. What they tell him is, in the long run, what he believes, with certain inconsiderable corrections by professionals trying to work him. If only because they have confidential access to him day in and day out, they are able to introduce their own notions into his head. He may have their jobs in his hands, but they have his ears and eyes, so to speak, in theirs.

Even the political garbage that emanates from Washington, and especially from the typewriters of the more eminent and puissant correspondents there resident, is seldom inspired, I am convinced, by orders from the Curtis or Munsey at home: its sources are rather to be sought in the professional deficiencies of the correspondents themselves—a class of men of almost incredible credulity. In other words, they are to be sought, not in the corruption and enslavement of the press, but in the incompetence of the press. The

average Washington correspondent, I believe, is honest enough, as honesty goes in the United States, though his willingness to do press work for the National Committees in campaign time and for other highly dubious agencies at other times is not to be forgotten. What ails him mainly is that he is a man without sufficient force of character to resist the blandishments that surround him from the moment he sets foot in Washington. A few men, true enough, resist, and their papers, getting the benefit of it, become notable for their independence and intelligence, but the great majority succumb almost at once. A few months of associating with the gaudy magnificoes of the town, and they pick up its meretricious values, and are unable to distinguish men of sense and dignity from mountebanks. A few clumsy overtures from the White House, and they are rattled and undone. They come in as newspaper men, trained to get the news and eager to get it; they end as tin-horn statesmen, full of dark secrets and unable to write the truth if they tried. Here I spread no scandal and violate no confidence. The facts are familiar to every newspaper man in the United States. A few of the more intelligent managing editors, cynical of ever counteracting the effects of the Washington miasma, seek to evade them by frequently changing their men. But the average managing editor is too stupid to deal with such difficulties. He prints balderdash because

he doesn't know how to get anything better—perhaps, in many cases, because he doesn't know that anything better exists. Drenched with propaganda at home, he is quite content to take more propaganda from Washington. It is not that he is dishonest, but that he is stupid—and, being stupid, a coward. The resourcefulness, enterprise and bellicosity that his job demands are simply not in him. He doesn't wear himself out trying to get the news, as romance has it; he slides supinely into the estate and dignity of a golf-player. American journalism suffers from too many golf-players. They swarm in the Washington Press Gallery. They, and not their bosses, are responsible for most of the imbecilities that now afflict their trade.

4

The journalists of the United States will never get rid of those afflictions by putting the blame on Dives, and never by making speeches at one another in annual conventions, and never by drawing up codes of ethics that most of their brethren will infallibly laugh at, as a Congressman laughs at a gentleman. The job before them—that is, before the civilized minority of them—is to purge their trade before they seek to dignify it—to clean house before they paint the roof and raise a flag. Can the thing be done? It not only can be done; it *has* been done. There are at least a dozen

newspapers in the United States that already show a determined effort to get out of the old slough. Any managing editor in the land, if he has the will, can carry his own paper with them. He is under no compulsion, save rarely, to employ this or that hand; it is not often that owners, or even business managers, take any interest in that business, save to watch the payroll. Is his paper trifling, ill-informed, petty and unfair? Is its news full of transparent absurdities? Are its editorials ignorant and without sense? Is it written in English full of *clichés* and vulgarities—English that would disgrace a manager of prize-fighters or a county superintendent of schools? Then the fault belongs plainly, not to some remote man, but to the proximate man—to the man who lets such drivel go by. He could get better if he wanted it, you may be sure. There is in all history no record of a newspaper owner who complained because his paper was well-edited. And I know of no business manager who objected when the complaints pouring in upon him, of misrepresentations, invasions of privacy, gross inaccuracies and other such nuisances, began to lighten.

Not a few managing editors, as I say, are moving in the right direction. There has been an appreciable improvement, during the past dozen years, in the general tone of American newspapers. They are still full of preposterous blather, but they are measurably more accurate, I believe, than they used to be, and

some of them are better written. A number of them are less absurdly partisan, particularly in the smaller cities. Save in the South and in the remoter fastnesses of New England the old-time party organ has gone out of fashion. In the big cities the faithful hacks of the New York *Tribune* type have begun to vanish. With them has gone the old-time drunken reporter, and in his place is appearing a young fellow of better education, and generally finer metal. The uplifters of the craft try to make him increase, and to that end encourage schools of journalism. But these seminaries, so far, show two palpable defects. On the one hand, they are seldom manned by men of any genuine professional standing, or of any firm notion of what journalism is about. On the other hand, they are nearly all too easy in their requirements for admission. Probably half of them, indeed, are simply refuges for students too stupid to tackle the other professions. They offer snap courses, and they promise quick jobs. The result is that the graduates coming out of them are mainly second-raters—that young men and women issuing from the general arts courses make better journalistic material.

What ails these schools of journalism is that they are not yet professional schools, but simply trade schools. Their like is to be found, not in the schools of medicine and law, but in the institutions that teach barbering, bookkeeping and scenario-writing. Obvi-

ously, the remedy for their general failure is to borrow a leaf from the book of the medical men, and weed out the incompetents, not after they have finished, but before they have begun. Twenty-five years ago any yokel who had got through the three R's was free to study medicine in the United States. In three years, and sometimes in two years, he was turned out to practice upon his fellow hinds, and once he had his license it was a practical impossibility to challenge him. But now there is scarcely a medical school in the United States that does not demand a bachelor's degree or its equivalent as a prerequisite to entrance, and the term of study in all of them is four years, and it must be followed by at least one year of hospital service. This reform was not achieved by passing laws against the old hedge schools: it was achieved simply by setting up the competition of good schools. The latter gradually elbowed the former out. Their graduates had immense advantages. They had professional prestige from the moment of their entrance into practice. The public quickly detected the difference between them and their competitors from the surviving hedge schools. Soon the latter began to disintegrate, and now all save a few of them have disappeared. The medical men improved their profession by making it more difficult to become a medical man. To-day the thing is a practical impossibility to any young man who is not of genuine intelligence.

But at least two-thirds of the so-called schools of journalism still admit any aspirant who can make shift to read and write. The pedagogues who run them cannot be expected to devote much thought or money to improving them; they are in the position of the quacks who used to run the hedge medical schools. The impulse toward improvement, if it ever comes at all, must come from the profession they presume to serve. Here is a chance for the editorial committees and societies of journalists that now spring up on all sides. Let them abandon their vain effort to frame codes of ethics and devote themselves to the nursery. If they can get together a committee on schools of journalism as wise and as bold as the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association they will accomplish more in a few years than they can hope to accomplish with academic codes of ethics in half a century.

All the rest will follow. The old fond theory, still surviving in many a newspaper office, that it is somehow discreditable for a reporter to show any sign of education and culture, that he is most competent and laudable when his intellectual baggage most closely approaches that of a bootlegger—this theory will fall before the competition of novices who have been adequately trained, and have more in their heads than their mere training. Journalism, compared to the other trades of literate men, is surely not unattrac-

tive, even to-day. It is more amusing than the army or the cloth, and it offers a better living at the start than either medicine or the law. There is a career in it for the young man of original mind and forceful personality—a career leading to power and even to a sort of wealth. In point of fact, it has always attracted such young men, else it would be in an even lower state than it is now. It would attract a great many more of them if its public opinion were more favorable to them—if they were less harassed by the commands of professional superiors of no dignity, and the dislike of fellows of no sense. Every time two of them are drawn in they draw another. The problem is to keep them. That is the central problem of journalism in the United States to-day.

I seem to be in a mood for constructive criticism. Let me add one more pearl of wisdom before I withdraw. I put it in the form of a question. Suppose the shyster lawyers of every town organized a third-rate club, called it the Bar Association, took in any Prohibition agent or precinct politician who could raise the dues, and then announced publicly, from the Courthouse steps, that it represented the whole bar, and that membership in it was an excellent form of insurance—that any member who paid his dues would get very friendly consideration, if he ever got into trouble, from the town's judges and district attorney. And suppose the decent lawyers of the town per-

mitted this preposterous pretension to go unchallenged—and some of them even gave countenance to it by joining the club. How long would the legal profession in that town retain its professional honor and dignity? How many laymen, after two or three years, would have any respect left for *any* lawyer, even a judge?

Yet the journalists of the United States permit that precise thing to go on under their noses. In almost every city of the country there is a so-called Press Club, and at least three-fourths of them are exactly like the hypothetical Bar Association that I have described. They are run by newspaper men of the worst type—many of them so incompetent and disreputable that they cannot even get jobs on newspapers. They take the money of all the town grafters and rascals on the pretense that newspaper favors go with its receipt. They are the resorts of idlers and blackmailers. They are nuisances and disgraces. Yet in how many towns have they been put down? In how many towns do the decent newspaper men take any overt action against them? My proposal is very simple. I propose that they be shut up, East, West, North and South, before anything more is said about codes of newspaper ethics.

II. FROM THE MEMOIRS OF A SUBJECT OF THE UNITED STATES

1

Government by Bounder

OF government, at least in democratic states, it may be said briefly that it is an agency engaged wholesale, and as a matter of solemn duty, in the performance of acts which all self-respecting individuals refrain from as a matter of common decency. The American newspapers supply examples every day, chiefly issuing out of Federal tribunals, judicial and administrative. The whole process of the Federal law, indeed, becomes a process of bounderism. Its catchpolls are not policemen, in any rational and ordinary sense, but simply sneaks and scoundrels with their eyes glued eternally to knot-holes. Imagine a man of ordinary decency discovering his son reading an account of the proceedings against the once celebrated Lady Cathcart, now happily forgotten? Would his exposition of the case take the form of patriotic hallelujahs, or would he caution the boy that such things are not done by gen-

tlemen? No wonder the teaching of patriotism in the Republic is being handed over to virgin schoolma'ms, who know of honor only as an anatomical matter! The business becomes too difficult for men who must face their fellow-men daily, and therewith the ancient prejudices of the race. Those prejudices, for unnumbered centuries, have run against the man who mouths the frailties of a fair one in the market-place. But the commission of Uncle Sam, it appears, repeals that obligation of elemental honor, as it repeals every other. One sworn to uphold the Constitution becomes straightway a licentiate in swinishness, with a mandate to examine the female guests of the nation publicly, and to denounce all who are not *virgo intacta*. This mandate covers not only the lowly ruffians told off to guard the ports, but also magnificoes of ministerial rank. The Cabinet of a great Christian nation meets behind locked doors to perform a business which, if done by an honest Elk, would bring his board of governors together to kick him out.

If such obscenities were rare one might set them down to moral profit and loss, and so try to forget them. But they happen every day. If a Cathcart case is not on the front pages, then a Whitney case or a Kollontai case is there. And day in and day out the newspapers are filled with the revolting muckeries of Prohibition agents, and their attendant district attorneys and judges. The whole trend of American leg-

islation, and with it of jurisprudence, seems to be toward such ideas of dignity and decency as prevail in remote and forlorn country villages, among the human débris of Puritanism. A court of justice, once a place where the state intervened to curb the savagery of the strong, is now an arena of savagery both cruel and cynical. The notion seems to be that any device of deceit or brutality is fair, so long as it helps to fill the jails. The government, through its authorized agents, sets itself deliberately to lure men into so-called crime, and then punishes them mercilessly for succumbing. Is there such a thing as a *contrat social?* Then certainly it is getting heavy blows in the Federal Union. For if it is not based upon the expectation that one citizen will treat another with common decency, it is based upon nothing more than a shadow—and that expectation is fast becoming vain among us. The natural confidence that every man should have in his fellows—that they will not hit below the belt, that they will not abuse his natural trust, that he may rely upon them, in a given situation, to act according to the principles of fair-play prevailing immemorially among civilized men—this confidence, when it touches American officialdom, has no longer any basis in fact. The government, under the Volstead Act, is a spy and a snitcher, just as, under the Immigration Act, it is a brute and blackguard, and under the Alien Property Act, a common thief.

Obviously, such things cannot go on without having profound effects upon the general American character. A government, though it may be worse than the average man it governs, is still made up of just such average men. If, by some process of legal decay, it is set to disgusting acts, then the consequence must be that, in the long run, they will become less disgusting. How the business has worked in other lands has been displayed with much snuffling by specialists in Americanism; unfortunately, they seem to show no interest in the phenomena when it is repeated at home. I have spoken of the father with a son ripe for instruction in the traditional decencies. Unfecund myself, I can only imagine his difficulties, but it must be obvious that they are serious. How, indeed, is he to interpret such an inescapable transaction as the Cathcart uproar? Is it his duty to tell his son that gentlemen set their dogs upon loose women? Or is it his duty to say that the United States is not a gentleman—nay, not even a decent thug?

Such doings, it seems to me, flow quite naturally out of the democratic theory. It holds, *imprimis*, that cads make just as good governors as civilized and self-respecting men, and it holds, *secundo*, that the notions of propriety and decency held by the mob are good enough for the state, and ought, in fact, to have the force of law. Thus it becomes increasingly difficult to be a good American, as the thing is officially de-

fined, and remain what all the other peoples of the world regard as a good citizen—that is, one who views the acts and ideas of his fellows with a tolerant and charitable eye, and wishes them to be free and happy. The whole tendency of American law, in this day, is to put down happiness wherever it is encountered, and the *mores* of the land march with the law. The doctrine seems to be that it is the highest duty of the citizen to police his fellows. What they naturally want to do is precisely what they must be kept from doing. To this business a large and increasing class of professional snouters and smellers addresses itself. How many noses it can muster, God only knows, but the number must be immensely large. In the single State of Ohio, with the Anti-Saloon League in the saddle, there are certainly at least five thousand, and every prowling village deacon and petty urban blackmailer is free to join the force as a volunteer. And in more civilized regions, where public opinion, even in the mob, runs against such putridities, the Federal government supplies the scoundrels.

This antagonism between democratic Puritanism and common decency is inherent in the nature of the two things, and leads to conflicts in all so-called "free" countries, but it is only in the United States that it has reached the stage of open and continuous war, with Puritanism sweeping the field and common decency in flight. Thus life in the Republic grows increasingly

uncomfortable to men of the more urbane and seemly sort, and, despite the great material prosperity of the country, the general stock of happiness probably diminishes steadily. For the thing that makes us enjoy the society of our fellows is not admiration of their inner virtues but delight in their outward manners. It is not enough that they are headed for heaven, and will sit upon the right hand of God through all eternity; it is also necessary that they be polite, generous, and, above all, trustworthy. We must have confidence in them in order to get any pleasure out of associating with them. We must be sure that they will not do unto us as we should refuse, even for cash in hand, to do unto them. It is the tragedy of the Puritan that he can never inspire this confidence in his fellow-men. He is by nature a pedant in ethics, and hence he is by nature a mucker. With the best of intentions he cannot rid himself of the belief that it is his duty to save us from our follies—*i. e.*, from all the non-puritanical acts and whimsies that make life charming. His duty to let us be happy takes second, third or fourth place. A Puritan cannot be tolerant—and with tolerance goes magnanimity. The late Dr. Woodrow Wilson was a typical Puritan—of the better sort, perhaps, for he at least toyed with the ambition to appear as a gentleman, but nevertheless a true Puritan. Magnanimity was simply beyond him. Confronted, on his death-bed, with the case of poor

old Debs, all his instincts compelled him to keep Debs in jail. I daresay that, as a purely logical matter, he saw clearly that the old fellow ought to be turned loose; certainly he must have known that Washington would not have hesitated, or Lincoln. But Calvinism triumphed as his intellectual faculties decayed. In the full bloom of health, with a plug hat on his head, he aped the gentry of his wistful adoration very cleverly, but lying in bed, stripped like Thackeray's Louis XIV, he reverted to his congenital Puritanism, which is to say, bounderism.

Of such sort are the grand seigneurs of the nation—the custodians of its dignity and honor. They speak for it to the world. They set the tone of the national life at home. Is there any widespread murmuring against them? I wish I could report that there was, but I see no sign of it. Instead, there seems to be only a resigned sort of feeling that nothing can be done about it—that the swinishness of government lies in the very nature of things, and so cannot be changed. Even the popular discontent with Prohibition is not a discontent with its sneaking and knavishness—its wholesale turning loose of licensed blacklegs and blackmailers, its appalling degradation of the judiciary, its corruption of Congress, its disingenuous invasion of the Bill of Rights. What is complained of is simply the fact that Scotch is dubious and costs too much. As bootlegging grows more efficient, I suppose,

even that complaint will sink to a whisper, perhaps in the form of a snigger. Of any forthright grappling with the underlying indecency there is little show. It would be difficult, in most American communities, to get signers for even the most academic protest against it. The American, played upon for years by a stream of jackass legislation, takes refuge in frank skulking. He first dodges the laws, and then he dodges the duty of protesting against them. His life becomes a process of sneaking through back-alleys, watching over one shoulder for the cop and over the other for his neighbor. Thus a-tremble (and with a weather eye open for Bolsheviks, atheists and loose women), he serves the high oath that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.

2

Constructive Proposal

A mood of constructive criticism being upon me, I propose forthwith that the method of choosing legislators now prevailing in the United States be abandoned and that the method used in choosing juries be substituted. That is to say, I propose that the men who make our laws be chosen by chance and against their will, instead of by fraud and against the will of all

the rest of us, as now. But isn't the jury system itself imperfect? Isn't it occasionally disgraced by gross abuse and scandal? Then so is the system of justice devised and ordained by the Lord God Himself. Didn't He assume that the Noachian Deluge would be a lasting lesson to sinful humanity—that it would put an end to all manner of crime and wickedness, and convert mankind into a race of Methodists? And wasn't Noah himself, its chief beneficiary, lying drunk, naked and uproarious within a year after the ark landed on Ararat? All I argue for the jury system, invented by man, is that it is measurably better than the scheme invented by God. It has its failures and its absurdities, its abuses and its corruptions, but taking one day with another it manifestly works. It is not the fault of juries that so many murderers go unwhipped of justice, and it is not the fault of juries that so many honest men are harassed by preposterous laws. The juries find the gunmen guilty: it is the judges higher up who deliver them from the noose, and turn them out to resume their butcheries. It is from judges again, and not from juries, that Volsteadian padlocks issue, and all the other devices for making a mock of the Bill of Rights. Are juries occasionally sentimental? Then let us not forget that it was their sentimentality, in the Eighteenth Century, that gradually forced a measure of decency and justice into the English Criminal Law. It was a jury that

blocked the effort of the Department of Justice to railroad Senator Wheeler to prison on false charges. It was another jury that detected and baffled the same Department's perjurers in the O'Leary case, during the late war. And it was yet another jury that delivered the eminent Fatty Arbuckle from what was, perhaps, the most disingenuous and outrageous persecution ever witnessed in a civilized land.

Would any American Legislature, or Congress itself, have resisted the vast pressure of the bureaucracy in these cases? To ask the question is to answer it. The dominant character of every legislative body ever heard of, at least in this great free Republic, is precisely its susceptibility to such pressure. It not only leaps when the bureaucracy cracks the whip; it also leaps to the whip-cracking of scores of extra-legal (and often, indeed, *il*legal) agencies. The Anti-Saloon League, despite its frequent disasters, is still so powerful everywhere that four legislators out of five obey it almost instinctively. When it is flouted, as has happened in a few States under an adverse pressure yet more powerful, the thing is marvelled at as a sort of miracle. The bureaucracy itself is seldom flouted at all. When it is in a moral mood, and heaving with altruistic sobs, the thing simply never happens. Is it argued that Congress has nevertheless defied it, and Dr. Coolidge with it? Then the argument comes from persons whose studies of Washing-

ton pathology have been very superficial. At least nine-tenths of the idiocies advocated by Dr. Coolidge and his highly dubious friends have been swallowed by both Houses with no more than a few reflex gags. Even the celebrated Warren appointment was defeated in the Senate by only a few votes—and the few votes were delivered, as connoisseurs will recall, by a process indistinguishable from an act of God. It is my contention that a jury of plain men, issuing unwilling from their plumbing-shops and grocery-stores and eager to get back to work, would have rejected Warren without leaving their box, and that the same jury, confronted by such things as the World Court imbecility, would dispose of them just as quickly.

Why were the learned Senators so much less intelligent and so much less resolute? For a plain reason. Fully two-thirds of them were not thinking of Warren as they voted; they were thinking of their jobs. The problem before them was not whether elevating the preposterous Warren was a reasonable and laudable measure, likely to benefit and glorify the United States, but whether voting for Warren would augment or diminish their chance of reëlection. In other words, they were not free agents, and in consequence not honest men. They had sought their jobs on their bellies, and they were eager to keep them, even at the cost of groveling on their bellies again. Say the worst

you can say against a box of twelve jurymen, and you can never say that. Not one among them sought his job. Not one among them wants to keep it. The business before them presents itself as a public duty to be done, not as an opportunity for private advantage. They are eager only to get it done decently, and go home.

So my proposal is that our Legislatures be chosen as our juries are now chosen—that the names of all the men eligible in each assembly district be put into a hat (or, if no hat can be found that is large enough, into a bathtub), and that a blind moron, preferably of tender years, be delegated to draw out one. Let the constituted catchpolls then proceed swiftly to this man's house, and take him before he can get away. Let him be brought into court forthwith, and put under a stupendous bond to serve as elected, and if he cannot furnish the bond, let him be kept until the appointed day in the nearest jail.

The advantages that this system would offer are so vast and so obvious that I hesitate to venture into the banality of rehearsing them. It would, in the first place, save the commonwealth the present excessive cost of elections, and make political campaigns unnecessary. It would, in the second place, get rid of all the heart-burnings that now flow out of every contest at the polls, and block the reprisals and charges of fraud that now issue from the heart-burnings. It

would, in the third place, fill all the State Legislatures with men of a peculiar and unprecedented cast of mind—men actually convinced that public service is a public burden, and not merely a private snap. And it would, in the fourth and most important place, completely dispose of the present degrading knee-bending and trading in votes, for nine-tenths of the legislators, having got into office unwillingly, would be eager only to finish their duties and go home, and even those who acquired a taste for the life would be unable to do anything to increase the probability, even by one chance in a million, of their reëlection.

The disadvantages of the plan are very few, and most of them, I believe, yield readily to analysis. Do I hear argument that a miscellaneous gang of tin-roofers, delicatessen dealers and retired bookkeepers, chosen by hazard, would lack the vast knowledge of public affairs needed by makers of laws? Then I can only answer (*a*) that no such knowledge is actually necessary, and (*b*) that few, if any, of the existing legislators possess it. The great majority of public problems, indeed, are quite simple, and any man may be trusted to grasp their elements in ten days who may be—and is—trusted to unravel the obfuscations of two gangs of lawyers in the same time. In this department the so-called expertness of so-called experts is largely imaginary. The masters of the tariff who sit at Washington know little about the

fundamental philosophy of protection, and care less; the subject, if discussed on the floor, would send the whole House flying to the Capitol bootleggers. The knowledge that these frauds are full of is simply knowledge of how many votes an extra ten cents on aluminum dishpans may be counted on producing, and how much the National Association of Brass Cuspidor Manufacturers deserves to be given for its campaign contribution of $10,000. Such is the science of the tariff as it is practiced by the professors who now flourish. It is my contention that a House of malt-and-hop dealers, garage mechanics and trolley conductors, brought in by the common hangman, would deal with the question with quite as much knowledge, and with a great deal more honesty. It might make mistakes, but it would not, at least, be pledged to them in advance. Some of its members might sell out, but there would remain, at worst, a workable minority of honest men.

The tariff, in any case, is no longer an issue. Neither are most of the other great politico-economical puzzles that harassed the statesmen of an elder day. They have all been solved; the two great parties agree upon them, with a few wild fellows dissenting. But as economics and finance go out, morals come in. The legislation of to-day is chiefly made up of quack cure-alls, invented by fanatics and supported by the bureaucracy. Well, I ask you what sort of Legislature

is the more likely to swallow these cure-alls: one made up of professionals eager to hold their jobs, or one made up of amateurs eager only to get rid of their jobs?

My scheme would have the capital merit, if it had no other, of barring the professionals from the game. They would lose their present enormous advantages as a class, and so their class would tend to disappear. Would that be a disservice to the state? Certainly not. On the contrary, it would be a service of the first magnitude, for the worst curse of democracy, as we suffer under it to-day, is that it makes public office a monopoly of a palpably inferior and ignoble group of men. They have to abase themselves in order to get it, and they have to keep on abasing themselves in order to hold it. The fact reflects itself in their general character, which is obviously low. They are men congenitally capable of ignoble acts, else they would not have got into public life at all. There are, of course, exceptions to that rule among them, but how many? What I contend is simply that the number of such exceptions is bound to be smaller in the class of professional job-seekers than it is in any other class, or in the population in general. What I contend, second, is that choosing legislators from that population, by chance, would reduce immensely the proportion of such crawling, slimy men in the halls of legislation, and that the effects would be instantly visible in a

great improvement in the justice and reasonableness of the laws.

Are juries ignorant? Then they are still intelligent enough to be entrusted with your life and mine. Are they venal? Then they are still honest enough to take our fortunes into their hands. Such is the fundamental law of the Germanic peoples, and it has worked for nearly a thousand years. I have launched my proposal that it be extended upward and onward, and the mood of constructive criticism passes from me. My plan belongs to any reformer who cares to lift it.

3

The Nature of Government

What ails the world mainly, at least in the political sense, is that its governments are too strong. It has been a recurrent pest since the dawn of civilization. Government is always depicted, in the orthodox texts, as the creation of the people governed; the theory is that they created it in order to secure their own safety and promote their daily business. But no Professor Oppenheimer was needed to demonstrate that it is really something imposed from without, or, at all events, the heir and assign of something imposed from without. Its interests and those of the people it governs are the same only occasionally, and then usually accidentally. True enough, it must sometimes

throw them bones, and even whole beefsteaks, lest they grow desperate and attempt to destroy it, but such concessions are always made grudgingly, and withdrawn very promptly the moment it looks safe.

The history of the United States would make all this plain enough, if that history were studied realistically. Consider, for example, the matter of liberty. The American people profess to esteem liberty very highly—so highly, in fact, that their common talk about it seems somewhat lyrical and excessive to the people of most other nations. They seem to believe that there is more of it on tap in the Republic than anywhere else on earth—that the Republic was actually founded for the sole purpose of giving it to them. Yet it must be obvious that their hold upon it is always precarious, and that their government tries to take it away from them whenever possible—not completely, perhaps, but always substantially. That government resisted their demand for it at the very start, and yielded only after a very severe struggle. The Bill of Rights was not in the original Constitution; it got in only as amendments. Ever since then, at every opportunity, the government has tried to weaken it. Here parties and personalities count for very little. The most successful raids upon the Bill of Rights so far recorded were made by Abraham Lincoln, a Republican and the spokesmen (in theory) of the inferior man, and by Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat and the

agent of what passes, in the United States, for an aristocracy.

The men who constitute the government always try to make it appear, of course, that they carry on their activities in a patriotic and altruistic way—in brief, that they are full of public spirit. But that pretension deceives no one, not even *Homo boobiens*. The average man, whatever his errors otherwise, at least sees clearly that the government is something lying outside him and outside the generality of his fellow men—that it is a separate, independent and often hostile power, only partly under his control, and capable, on occasion, of doing him great harm. In his romantic moments, he may think of it as a benevolent father or even as a sort of *jinn* or god, but he never thinks of it as part of himself. In times of trouble he looks to it to perform miracles for his benefit; at other times he sees it as an enemy with which he must do constant battle. Is it a fact of no significance that robbing the government is everywhere regarded as a crime of less magnitude than robbing an individual, or even a corporation? In the United States to-day it is punished only when it is complicated by some secondary, and, in the public judgment, worse offense—for example, depriving crippled war veterans of their lawful relief. Otherwise, it carries a smaller penalty and infinitely less odium than acts that are intrinsically trivial—for example, spitting on the sidewalk or

marrying two wives. None of the thieves who robbed the government at Hog Island during the war has ever gone to jail. The airship contractors, though they made off with nearly a billion dollars, are still all at large. So are all the camp contractors. More, the man who broke up the feeble and abortive effort to punish these scoundrels—who denounced that effort as, in some mysterious way, an *attentat* against public morality—that man is now first in succession to the presidency of the Republic. His indignation plainly had public sentiment behind it. He was and is an accomplished professor of the mind of man under democracy.

Other politicians, less gifted in that science, often take the other side, and so come to grief. They assume absurdly that the public conscience is opposed to robbing the government, and try to climb into popularity and high office by pursuing the gay fellows who do it. The attempt almost always fails. The great masses of the plain people, true enough, enjoy the chase, as they enjoy, indeed, *any* chase. The damning evidence, as it unrolls, delights them; they devour every accusation, however ill supported. But it usually turns out in the end that they do not care to eat the game. The minute the evidence is all in they lose interest; there is no demand from them for the jailing of the accused. On the contrary, they sympathize with the accused, and show it actively when the time

comes to supply conscripts for the trial jury. Perhaps the safest men in the whole United States to-day are the gentlemen who have been indicted for robbing the government. Every such indictment is a sort of policy of insurance against going to jail.

What lies behind all this, I believe, is a deep sense of the fundamental antagonism between the government and the people it governs. It is apprehended, not as a committee of citizens chosen to carry on the communal business of the whole population, but as a separate and autonomous corporation, mainly devoted to exploiting the population for the benefit of its own members. Robbing it is thus an act almost devoid of infamy—an exploit rather resembling those of Robin Hood and the eminent pirates of tradition. When a private citizen is robbed a worthy man is deprived of the fruits of his industry and thrift; when the government is robbed the worst that happens is that certain rogues and loafers have less money to play with than they had before. The notion that they have earned that money is never entertained; to most men it would seem extremely ludicrous. They are simply rascals who, by accidents of law, have a somewhat dubious right to a share in the earnings of their fellowmen. When that share is diminished by private enterprise the business is, on the whole, far more laudable than not.

The average man, when he pays taxes, certainly

does not believe that he is making a prudent and productive investment of his money; on the contrary, he feels that he is being mulcted in an excessive amount for services that, in the main, are useless to him, and that, in substantial part, are downright inimical to him. He may be convinced that a police force, say, is necessary for the protection of his life and property, and that an army and navy safeguard him from being reduced to slavery by some vague foreign kaiser, but even so he views these things as extravagantly expensive—he sees in even the most essential of them an agency for making it easier for the exploiters constituting the government to rob him. The policeman, in fact, is his symbol for a thief. The army and navy, as he sees them, are blankets for mere display, ostentation and waste—of his hard-earned money. The rest of the government is purely predatory and useless; he believes that he gets no more benefit from its vast and costly operations than he gets from the money he lends to his wife's brother. It is a power that stands over him constantly, ever alert for new chances to squeeze him. If it could do so safely it would strip him to his hide. If it leaves him anything at all, it is simply prudentially, as a farmer leaves a hen some of her eggs.

Thus he sees nothing wrong, in the sense that robbing a neighbor is wrong to him, in turning the tables upon it whenever the opportunity offers. When he

steals anything from it he is only recovering his own, with fair interest and a decent profit. Two gangs thus stand confronted: on the one hand the gang of drones and exploiters constituting the government, and on the other hand the body of prehensile and enterprising citizens. The latter is certainly not made up exclusively, as the Liberals and other such romantics seem to think, of bankers, railroad stockholders, great industrialists and other such magnificoes. There is plenty of room in it for more lowly men, if only they have the courage to horn in. During the late war all the union men of the nation, by pooling their strength and so dispersing the risk, made a magnificent and successful effort to get their share: they stole almost as much, in all probability, as the dollar-a-year men. And when the war was over the soldiers, deprived of their chance while the going was good, demanded it belatedly. The chief argument for the bonus was not that the veterans of the war had leaped gallantly to the defense of democracy, for at least two-thirds of them, as everyone knows, tried their best to evade service. The chief argument was that they were forced into the army against their will and in violation of their private interests—that they didn't get their fair chance at the loot. They did not demand the punishment of those who looted while they served; they only demanded a rectification of the injustice which kept them honest themselves.

The difference between the two gangs—of professionals and of amateurs—is that the former has law on its side, and so enjoys an unfair advantage. Worse, it makes the very laws it profits by. Yet worse, it controls all the agencies which execute them, including the courts. The other gang is almost unarmored. The government is always able, when it happens to be so disposed, to single out a few of its ring-leaders and clap them into jail. Such proceedings, of course, are unpopular, but they are nevertheless possible. But the government gang is well-nigh immune to punishment. Its worst extortions, even when they are baldly for private profit, carry no certain penalties under our laws. Since the first days of the Republic less than a dozen of its members have been impeached, and only a few obscure understrappers have ever been put into prison. The number of men sitting at Atlanta and Leavenworth for revolting against the extortions of the government is always ten times as great as the number of government officials condemned for oppressing the tax-payers to their own gain. Thus the combat which goes on is not unlike that between the Anti-Saloon League and the bootleggers. The Anti-Saloon League, it must be manifest, is quite as criminal as the bootleggers; it devotes itself professionally to violating the Bill of Rights; its kept judges have pretty well disposed of all the constitutional guarantees of the citizen. But its control of the govern-

ment puts it above the law. Its agents, on and off the bench, commit their crimes almost unmolested; only one of them, in fact, has ever got into jail—and that was by a sort of accident.

But public opinion is mainly on the side of the bootleggers. They represent, in the combat, the plain man, eternally oppressed and robbed by his overlords. In their popularity is to be seen the first glimmers of a revolt that must one day shake the world—a revolt, not against this or that form of government, but against the tyranny at the bottom of *all* government. Government, to-day, is growing too strong to be safe. There are no longer any citizens in the world; there are only subjects. They work day in and day out for their masters; they are bound to die for their masters at call. Out of this working and dying they tend to get less and less. On some bright to-morrow, a geological epoch or two hence, they will come to the end of their endurance, and then such newspapers as survive will have a first-page story well worth its black headlines.

4

Freudian Footnote

That the life of man is a struggle and an agony was remarked by the Brisbanes and Dr. Frank Cranes

of the remotest antiquity. The earliest philosophers busied themselves with the fact, and so did the earliest poets. It runs like a *Leitmotif* through the literature of the Greeks and the Jews alike. "Vanity of vanities," saith the Preacher, "vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" "O ye deathward-going tribes of men," chants Sophocles, "what do your lives mean except that they go to nothingness?" But not placidly, not unresistingly, not without horrible groans and gurgles. Man is never honestly the fatalist, nor even the stoic. He fights his fate, often desperately. He is forever entering bold exceptions to the rulings of the bench of gods. This fighting, no doubt, makes for human progress, for it favors the strong and the brave. It also makes for beauty, for lesser men try to escape from a hopeless and intolerable world by creating a more lovely one of their own. Poetry, as every one knows, is a means to that end—facile, and hence popular. The aim of poetry is to give a high and voluptuous plausibility to what is palpably not true. I offer the Twenty-third Psalm as an example: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." It is immensely esteemed by the inmates of almshouses, and by gentlemen waiting to be hanged. I have to limit my own reading of it, avoiding soft and yielding moods, for I too, in my way, am a gentleman waiting to be hanged, as you are. If the air were impregnated with poetry, as it is with carbon in Pittsburgh, and alcohol

in Hoboken, N. J., and stale incense in Boston, the world would be a more comfortable and caressing place, but the service of the truth would be neglected. The truth is served by prose. The aim of prose is not to conceal the facts, but to display them. It is thus apt to be harsh and painful. All that the philosophers and metaphysicians of the world have accomplished, grinding away in their damp cells since man became cryptococcygeal, is to prove that *Homo sapiens* and *Equus asinus* are brothers under their skins. As for the more imaginative *prosateurs*, they have pretty well confined themselves, since the earliest beginnings of their craft, to the lugubrious chronicle of man's struggle and defeat. I know of no first-rate novel that hasn't this theme. In all of them, from "Don Quixote" to "The Brothers Karamazov" and from "Vanity Fair" to "McTeague," we are made privy to the agonies of a man resisting his destiny, and getting badly beaten.

The struggle is always the same, but in its details it differs in different ages. There was a time, I believe, when it was mainly a combat between the natural instincts of the individual and his yearning to get into Heaven. That was an unhealthy time, for throttling the instincts is almost as deleterious as breathing bad air: it makes for an unpleasant clamminess. The Age of Faith, seen in retrospect, looks somehow pale and puffy: one admires its saints and

anchorites without being conscious of any very active desire to shake hands with them and smell them. To-day the yearning to get into Heaven is in abeyance, at least among the vast majority of humankind, and so the ancient struggle takes a new form. In the main, it is a struggle of man with society—a conflict between his desire to be respected and his impulse to follow his own bent. It seems to me that society usually wins. There are, to be sure, free spirits in the world, but their freedom, in the last analysis, is not much greater than that of a canary in a cage. They may leap from perch to perch; they may bathe and guzzle at their will; they may flap their wings and sing. But they are still in the cage, and soon or late it conquers them. What was once a great itch for long flights and the open spaces is gradually converted into a fading memory and nostalgia, sometimes stimulating but more often merely blushful. The free man, made in God's image, is converted into a Freudian case.

Such Freudian cases swarm in modern society; they are hidden in all sorts of unexpected places. Observing a Congressman, one sees only a gross and revolting shape, with dull eyes and prehensile hands. But under that preposterous mask there may be yearnings, and some of them may be of high voltage and laudable delicacy. There are Congressmen, I have no doubt, who regret their lost honor, as women often

do in the films. Tossing in their beds on hot, sticky Washington nights, their gizzards devoured by bad liquor, they may lament the ruin that the service of Demos has brought to their souls. For Congressmen, despite their dishonorable trade, are exactly like the rest of us at bottom, and respond to the same biogenetic laws. In infancy they go to Sunday-school. Passing through adolescence, they are idealists, and dream of saving the world. Come to young manhood, they suffer the purifying pangs of love. The impulse to seek political preferment, when it arises in them, is not always, nor primarily, an impulse to grab something, to victimize and exploit the rest of us. That comes later: even Penrose and Roosevelt started out as altruists and reformers. But the rules of the game run one way, and common honesty and common decency run another. There comes a time when the candidate must surrender either his ideals or his aspirations. If he is in Congress it is a sign that he has preserved the latter.

Democracy produces swarms of such men, in politics and on other planes, and their secret shames and sorrows, I believe, are largely responsible for the generally depressing tone of democratic society. Old Freud, living in a more urbane and civilized world, paid too little heed to that sort of repression. He assumed fatuously that what was repressed was always, or nearly always, something intrinsically discredi-

table, or, at all events, anti-social—for example, the natural impulse to neck a pretty woman, regardless of her husband's protests. But under democracy that is only half the story. The democrat with a yearning to shine before his fellows must not only repress all the common varieties of natural wickedness; he must also repress many of the varieties of natural decency. His impulse to speak his mind freely, to tell the truth as he sees it, to be his own man, comes into early and painful collision with the democratic dogma that such things are not nice—that the most worthy and laudable citizen is that one who is most like all the rest. In youth, as every one knows, this dogma is frequently challenged, and sometimes with great asperity, but the rebellion, taking one case with another, is not of long duration. The campus Nietzsche, at thirty, begins to feel the suction of Rotary; at forty he is a sound Mellon man; at fifty he is fit for Congress.

But his early yearning for freedom and its natural concomitants is still not dead; it is merely imprisoned in the depths of his subconscious. Down there it drags out its weary and intolerable years, protesting silently but relentlessly against its durance. We know, by Dr. Freud's appalling evidence, what the suppression of the common wickednesses can do to the individual—how it can shake his reason on its throne, and even give him such things as gastritis, migraine and angina

pectoris. Every Sunday-school in the land is full of such wrecks; they recruit the endless brigades of lady policemen and male wowsers. A vice-crusader is simply an unfortunate who goes about with a brothel in his own cellar; a Prohibitionist is one who has buried rum, but would have been safer drinking it. All this is now a commonplace of knowledge to every American school-girl. The wowsers themselves give the facts a universal dispersion by trying to suppress them. But so far no psychoanalyst has done a tome on the complexes that issue out of moral struggles against common decency, though they are commoner under democracy than the other kind, and infinitely more ferocious. A man who has throttled a bad impulse has at least some consolation in his agonies, but a man who has throttled a good one is in a bad way indeed. Yet this great Republic swarms with such men, and their sufferings are under every eye. We have more of them, perhaps, than all the rest of Christendom, with heathendom thrown in to make it unanimous.

I marvel that no corn-fed Freud or Adler has ever investigated the case of the learned judges among us, and especially those of the Federal rite. Prohibition, I suspect, has filled them with such repressions that even a psychoanalyst, plowing into the matter, would be shocked. Enforcing its savage and anti-social mandates, with fanatics pulling them and blacklegs push-

ing them, has obviously compelled them to make away with all the pruderies that are natural to men of their class and condition. There may be individuals among them, to be sure, who were born without any pruderies and hence do not suffer, just as there are individuals who were born without any capacity for affection and hence show no trace of the Œdipus complex, but such men must be very rare, even among politicians, even among lawyers. The average judge, I take it, is much like the rest of us. When he is free to do it, he does the decent thing. His natural impulse is to speak the truth as he sees it, to challenge error and imposture, to frown upon fraud. What, now, if his high and solemn duties compel him to treat fraud as if it were divine revelation? What if he must spend his days prospering rogues and oppressing honest men? What if his oath wars horribly with his conscience? No Freud was needed to argue that the effect upon him must be very evil. He cannot perform his work without assassinating his inner integrity. Putting on his black gown, he must simultaneously cram his unconscious with all the sound impulses and natural decencies that make him the noble fellow that he is.

The clinical effects are certainly not occult. One hears constantly of judges coming down with symptoms which, in ordinary men, would be accepted as proofs of inner turmoils, insusceptible to correction

by the pharmacopœia. They break into hysterical tirades from the bench; they speak in unintelligible language; they deliver judgments that upset the laws of logic; they complain of buzzings in the ears, flashes before the eyes, and vague bellyaches. Two Federal judges, of late, have committed suicide. One climbed a high mountain in his motor-car, and then leaped into space: a monstrous act, and no doubt of plain significance to a Freudian adept. The other left a note saying frankly that Prohibition had wrecked him. The faculty has at such disturbances of the psyche by hunting for focal infections and pulling teeth: the whole judiciary tends to become toothless. But it would be easier and cheaper and more effective, I am convinced, to send for a psychoanalyst. The stricken judge would come out of the room cured, and the psychoanalyst would come out with a new outfit of complexes.

I speak of the judges because their sufferings are palpable. But there must be swarms of other victims in this eminent free nation. Every one of us has been under the steam-roller; every one of us, in this way or that, conforms unwillingly, and has the corpse of a good impulse belowstairs. There are probably no exceptions. Psychoanalyze a Methodist bishop, and you'll probably find him stuffed with good impulses, all of them repressed. On blue afternoons, perhaps, there sneaks out of his unconscious a civilized yearn-

ing for a decent drink; in the dark watches of the night he remembers a Catholic girl of his youth, and weeps that she was so fair; he may even, passing a public library, feel a sudden, goatish inclination to go in and read a good book. Suppressed, such appetites make him uncomfortable, unhappy, desperate, an enemy to society. Dredged up by some super-Freud, and dissipated in the sunlight, they would leave him an honest and happy man.

5

Bach to Bach!

Ah, at evening, to be drinking from the glassy pond, to have—oh, better than all marrow-bones!—the fresh illusion of lapping up the stars!

I take the thought from Patou, the forward-looking hound-dog in Rostand's "Chantecler." Let him stand as a symbol of the whole melancholy company of crib-haltered but aspiring Americans, their hands doomed to go-getting but their hearts leaping into interstellar space. Patou, lifted to his hind legs and outfitted with pantaloons, would have made a capital Rotarian. Condemned by destiny to a kennel in a barnyard, he yet had that soaring, humorless Vision which is the essence of Rotary, and the secret, no doubt, of its firm hold upon otherwise unpoetical men. For even in the paradise of Babbitt, Babbitt

is vaguely uneasy and unhappy. He needs something more, he finds, than is to be found in bulging order-books, in innumerable caravans of prospects, and in belching chimneys and laden trains. He needs something more than is to be got out of blowing spitballs and playing golf. So he searches for that something in the realms of the fancy, where the husks of things fall and their inner sap is revealed. He reads the dithyrambs of Edgar Albert Guest, Arthur Brisbane, and Dr. Frank Crane. He listens to the exhortations of itinerant rhetoricians, gifted and eloquent men, specialists in what it is all about. He intones "Sweet Adeline," and is not ashamed of the tear that babbles down his nose. Thus Babbitt, too, is tantalized by a Grail; he seeks it up and down the gorgeous corridors of his Statler Hotel, past the cigar-stand and the lair of the hat-check gal, and on to the perfumed catacombs of the lovely manicurist and the white-robed chirotonsor. *Non in solo pane vivit homo.* Man cannot live by bread alone. He must hope also. He must dream. He must yearn.

The fact explains the Rotarian and his humble brother, the Kiwanian; more, it strips them of not a little of their superficial obnoxiousness. They are fools, but they are not quite damned. If their quest is carried on in motley, they at least trail after better men. And so do all their brethren of Service, great and small—the Americanizers, the Law Enforcers,

the boosters and boomers, and the endless others after their kind. At first glance, one sees in these visionaries only noisy and preposterous fellows, disturbing the peace of their betters. But a closer examination is more favorable to them. They are tortured, in their odd, clumsy fashion, by the same ringing in the ears that maddened Ludwig van Beethoven. They suffer from the same optical delusions, painful and not due to sin, that set the prophets of antiquity to howling: they look at a Harding or a Coolidge and see a Man. What lures them to their bizarre cavortings—and it is surely not to be sniffed at *per se*—is a dim and disturbing mirage of a world more lovely and serene than the one the Lord God has doomed them to live in. What they lack in common, thus diverging from the prophets, is a rational conception of what it ought to be, and might be.

It is somewhat astonishing that 100% Americans should wander so helplessly in this wilderness. For there is a well-paved road across the whole waste, and it issues, at its place of beginning, from the tombs of the Fathers, and their sacred and immemorial dust. Straight as a pistol shot it runs, until at the other end it sweeps up a glittering slope to a shrine upon a high hill. This shrine may be seen on fair days for many leagues, and presents a magnificent spectacle. Its base is confected of the bones of Revolutionary heroes, and out of them rises an heroic effigy of George Wash-

ington, in alabaster. Surrounding this effigy, and on a slightly smaller scale, are graven images of Jefferson, Franklin, Nathan Hale, old Sam Adams, John Hancock and Paul Revere, each with a Bible under his arm and the Stars and Stripes fluttering over his shoulder. A bit to the rear, and without the Bible, is a statue of Thomas Paine. Over the whole structure stretch great bands of the tricolor, in silk, satin and other precious fabrics. Red and white stripes run up and down the legs of Washington, and his waistcoat is spattered with stars. The effect is the grandiose one of a Democratic national convention. At night, in the American manner, spotlights play upon the shrine. Hot dogs are on sale nearby, that pilgrims may not hunger, and there is a free park for Fords, with running water and booths for the sale of spare parts. It is the shrine of Liberty!

But where are the pilgrims? One observes the immense parking space and the huge pyramids of hot dogs, and one looks for great hordes of worshipers, fighting their way to the altar-steps. But they are *non est*. Now and then a honeymoon couple wanders in from the rural South or Middle West, to gape at the splendors hand in hand, and now and then a schoolma'm arrives with a flock of her pupils, and lectures them solemnly out of a book. More often, perhaps, a foreign visitor is to be seen, with a *couronne* of tin bay-leaves under his arm. He deposits the *couronne*

at the foot of Washington, crosses himself lugubriously, and retires to the nearest hot dog stand. But where are the Americanos? Where are the he-men, heirs to the heroes whose gilded skulls here wait the Judgment Day? Where are the Americanizers? Where are the boosters and boomers? Where are the sturdy Coolidge men? Where are the Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions? Where are the authors of newspaper editorials? The visionaries of Chautauqua? The keepers of the national idealism? Go search for them, if you don't trust the first report of your eyes! Go search for honest men in Congress! They are simply not present. For among all the visions that now inflame forward-looking and up-and-coming men in this great Republic, there is no sign any more of the one that is older than all the rest, and that is the vision of Liberty. The Fathers saw it, and the devotion they gave to it went far beyond three cheers a week. It survived into Jackson's time, and its glow was renewed in Lincoln's. But now it is no more.

The phenomenon is curious, and deserves far more study by eminent psychologists than it has got. I may undertake that study as an amateur in a work reserved for my senility; at the moment I can only point to the fact. Liberty, to-day, not only lacks its old hot partisans and romantic fanatics in America; it has grown so disreputable that even to mention it, save in terms of a fossilized and hollow rhetoric, be-

comes a sort of indecorum. I know of but one national organization that advocates it with any genuine heartiness, and that organization, not long ago, was rewarded with a violent denunciation on the floor of the House of Representatives: only the lone Socialist, once in jail himself for the same offense, made bold to defend it. From the chosen elders of the nation, legislative, executive and judicial, one hears only that demanding it is treason. It is the first duty of the free citizen, it appears, to make a willing sacrifice of the Bill of Rights. He must leap to the business gladly, and with no mental reservations. If he pauses, then he is a Bolshevik.

I venture to argue that this doctrine is evil, and that renouncing it would yield a sweeter usufruct to the American people than all the varieties of Service that now prevail. Of what use is it for Kiwanis to buy wooden legs for one-legged boys if they must grow up as slaves to the Anti-Saloon League? What is the net gain to a boomed and boosted town if its people, coincidentally, lose their right to trial by jury and their inviolability of domicile? Who gives a damn for the Coolidge idealism if its chief agent and executor, even above the Cabinet, is the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *i. e.*, a gang of snooty ecclesiastics, committed unanimously to the doctrines that Christ should have been jailed for the business at

Cana, that God sent she-bears to "tare" forty-two little children because they had made fun of Elisha's bald head, and that Jonah swallowed the whale? Imagine an immigrant studying the new science of Americanism, and coming to the eighteen amendments to the Constitution. What will he make of the discovery that only the Eighteenth embodies a categorical imperative—that all the others must yield to it when they conflict with it—that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth are not binding upon the Prohibitionists of the South and that the First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth are not binding upon Prohibitionists anywhere?

I preach reaction. Bach to Bach! I can't find the word Service in the Constitution, but what is there is sounder and nobler than anything ever heard of where Regular Fellows meet to slap backs and blow spitballs—or, at all events, it *was* there before January 16, 1920. The Fathers, too, had a Vision. They were, in their way, forward-lookers; they were even go-getters. What they dreamed of and fought for was a civilization based upon a body of simple, equitable and reasonable laws—a code designed to break the chains of lingering mediævalism, and set the individual free. The thing they imagined was a commonwealth of free men, all equal before the law. Some of them had grave doubts about it, and put off making it a reality as long as possible, but in the end the optimists won over the doubters, and they all made

the venture together. I am myself no partisan of their scheme. It seems to me that there were fundamental defects in it—that some of their primary assumptions were false. But in their intention, at least, there was something exhilarating, and in it there was also something sound. That something was the premiss that the first aim of civilization is to augment and safeguard the dignity of man—that it is worth nothing to be a citizen of a commonwealth which holds the humblest citizen cheaply and uses him ill.

This is what we have lost, and not all the whooping and yelling of new messiahs can cover the fact. The government, as I have shown, becomes the common enemy of all well-disposed and decent men. It commandeers and wastes their money, it assaults and insults them with outrageous and extravagant laws, and it turns loose upon them a horde of professional blackguards, bent only upon destroying their liberties. The individual, facing this pestilence of tyranny and corruption, finds himself quite helpless. If he goes to the agents of the government itself with his protest, he gets only stupid reviling. If he turns to his fellow victims for support, he is lucky to escape jail. Worse, he is lucky to escape lynching. For the thing has gone so far that the great majority of dull and unimaginative men have begun to take it as a matter of course —almost as the order of nature. The Bill of Rights becomes a mere series of romantic dithyrambs, with-

out solid substance or meaning—say, like the Sermon on the Mount. The school-books of the next generation will omit it. The few fanatics who remember it will keep it on the top shelf, along with the Family Doctor Book, the scientific works of Dr. Marie Scopes, and "Only a Boy."

Against all this I protest, feebly and too late. The land swarms with Men of Vision, all pining for Service. What I propose is that they forget their brummagem Grails for one week, and concentrate their pep upon a chase that really leads uphill. Let us have a Bill of Rights Week. Let us have a Common Decency Week.

III. THE HUMAN MIND

1

On Metaphysicians

IN the Summer of the year, when the weather on my estates in the Maryland jungles is too hot for serious mental activity, I always give over a couple of weeks to a re-reading of the so-called philosophical classics, with a glance or two at the latest compositions of the extant philosophers. It is a far from agreeable job, and I undertake it sadly, as a surgeon, after an untoward and fatal hemorrhage, brushes up on anatomy; there is, somewhere down in my recesses, an obscure conviction that I owe a duty to my customers, who look to me to flatter them with occasional dark references to Aristotle, Spinoza and the categorical imperative. Out of the business, despite its high austerity, I always carry away the feeling that I have had a hell of a time. That is, I carry away the feeling that the art and mystery of philosophy, as it is practiced in the world by professional philosophers, is largely moonshine and wind-music—or, to borrow Henry Ford's searching term, bunk.

Is this anarchy and atheism? Has Russian gold got to me at last? Am I in training for the abattoir of the Department of Justice? In stay of execution I can only point to the philosophy books themselves. For three millenniums their authors have been searching the world and its suburbs for the truth—and they have yet to agree upon so much as the rules of the search. Since the dawn of time they have been trying to get order and method into the thinking of *Homo sapiens*—and *Homo sapiens,* when he thinks at all, is still a brother to the lowly ass (*Equus africanus*), even to the ears and the bray. I include the philosophers themselves, unanimously and especially. True enough, one arises now and then who somehow manages to be charming and even plausible. I point to Plato, to Nietzsche, to Schopenhauer. But it is always as poet or politician, not as philosopher. The genuine professional, sticking to his gloomy speculations, is as dull as a table of logarithms. What man in human history ever wrote worse than Kant? Was it, perhaps, Hegel? My own candidate, if I were pushed, would be found among the so-called Critical Realists of today. They achieve the truly astounding feats of writing worse than the New Thoughters, whom they also resemble otherwise—nay, even worse than the late Warren Gamaliel Harding.

What reduces all philosophers to incoherence and folly, soon or late, is the lure of the absolute. It tor-

tures them as the dream of Law Enforcement tortures Prohibitionists. Now and then, when they forget it transiently, they grow relatively rational and even ingratiating, but in the long run they always resume their chase of it, and that chase carries them inevitably into the intellectual Bad Lands. For the absolute, of course, is a mere banshee, a concept without substance or reality. No such thing exists. When, by logical devices, it is triumphantly established, the feat is exactly on all fours with that of the mathematician who proved that twice two was double once two. Who believes in Kant's categorical imperatives today? Certainly not any student of psychology who has got beyond the first page of his horn-book. There is, in fact, no idea in any man that may be found certainly in all men. Only the philosophers seem to cling to the doctrine that there is. Functioning as theologians, for example, they still argue for the immortality of the soul on the ground that a yearning for immortal life is in all of us. But that is simply nonsense. I know scores of men in whom no such yearning is apparent, either outwardly or in their consciousness. I have seen such men die, and they passed into what they held to be oblivion without showing the slightest sign of wishing that it was something else. All the other absolutes, whether theological, ethical or philosophical in the strict sense, are likewise chimeras. On inspection it always turns out that they

are no more the same to all men than a woman A or a cocktail B is the same to all men. They are even different to the same man at different times. I cherished ethical postulates at the age of twenty-one that seem puerile to me to-day, and to-day I am cherishing postulates that would have shocked me then. *Quod est veritas?* Simply something that seems to me to be so—now, and to me. It has no more objective character than the sweet and dreadful passion of love. It is as tenderly personal and private as a gallstone.

The common sense of mankind, which is immensely superior to the anæmic, camphor-smelling wisdom of philosophers, long ago revolted against the quest of the absolute. Men found back in Mousterian days that it got them nowhere, but left them, intellectually speaking, with one leg up and one leg down. So they began to set up arbitrary values, if only to get some peace. Religion is a series of such arbitrary values. Most of them are dubious, and many of them are palpably false, but the experience of the race has shown that, for certain types of mind and in certain situations, they work. So they are accepted as, if not quite true, then as true enough, and the gloomy business of rectifying them, when they need it, is turned over to theologians, who are enemies of mankind anyhow, and thus deserve and get no sympathy when they suffer. Arbitrary values of the same sort are made use of every day in all the fields of human

speculation and activity. They are brilliantly visible in the field of politics and government. Here they are rammed into children in the little red schoolhouse, and questioning them later in life becomes a crime against the Holy Ghost. Is it therefore to be assumed that they are true? Not at all. Many of them are so transparently dubious that even patriots, preparing to mumble them, have to make ready for it by closing their eyes and taking long breaths. But they at least work. They at least get some semblance of order into the complicated and dangerous business of living together in society. They at least relieve the mind. And so they are cherished.

Unfortunately, human existence is not static but dynamic, and in consequence the axioms that work well to-day tend to work less well to-morrow. Now and then, as the social organization changes, certain ancient and honorable ones have to be abandoned. This is always a perilous business, and usually it is accomplished only by a letting of blood. The fact is not without its significance. In the long run, I believe, it will be found that (as the Behaviorists argue even now) human ideas come out of the liver far more often than they come out of the soul, and that changing them is a job for surgeons rather than for metaphysicians. The thought leads at once to a constructive suggestion, and in the exalted field of pedagogy. What is the present aim of education, as the professors

thereof expound it? To make good citizens. And what is a good citizen? Simply one who never says, does or thinks anything that is unusual. Schools are maintained in order to bring this uniformity up to the highest possible point. A school is a hopper into which children are heaved while they are still young and tender; therein they are pressed into certain standard shapes and covered from head to heels with official rubber-stamps. Unluckily, it is a very inefficient machine. Many children, though squeezed diligently, do not take the standard shapes. Others have hides so oily that the most indelible of rubber-stamps is washed from them by the first rain, or even blown from them by the first wind.

It is my notion that surgery will one day find a remedy for this unpleasant and dangerous state of affairs. It will first perfect means of detecting such aberrant children in their early youth, and then it will devise means of curing them. The child who laughs when the Bill of Rights is read will not be stood in a corner and deprived of chewing-gum, as now; it will be sent to the operating-table, and the offending convolution, or gland, or tumor, or whatever it is will be cut out. While it is lying open all other suspicious excrescences will be removed, and so it will be returned to the class-room a normal 100% American. This scheme, if it turns out to be practicable, will add a great deal to the happiness of

the American people. It will not only protect those of us who are naturally respectable from the menace of strange and disturbing ideas; it will also relieve the present agonies of those who cherish them. For the search for imaginary absolutes—*i. e.*, for the truth, that ghost—is not pleasant, as poets allege, but intensely painful. There is no record in human history of a happy philosopher: they exist only in romantic legend. Many of them have committed suicide; practically all of them have turned their children out of doors and beaten their wives. And no wonder! If you want to find out how a philosopher feels when he is engaged in the practice of his profession, go to the nearest zoo and watch a chimpanzee at the wearying and hopeless job of chasing fleas. Both suffer damnably, and neither can win.

2

On Suicide

The suicide rate, so I am told by an intelligent mortician, is going up everywhere on earth. It is good news to his profession, which has been badly used of late by the progress of medical science, and scarcely less so by the rise of cut-throat, go-getting competition within its own ranks. It is also good news to those romantic optimists who like to believe that

the human race is capable of rational acts. What could be more logical than suicide? What could be more preposterous than keeping alive? Yet nearly all of us cling to life with desperate devotion, even when the length of it remaining is palpably slight, and filled with agony. Half the time of all medical men is wasted keeping life in human wrecks who have no more intelligible reason for hanging on than a cow has for mooing.

In part, no doubt, this absurd frenzy has its springs in the human imagination, or, as it is more poetically called, the human reason. Man, having acquired the high faculty of visualizing death, visualizes it as something painful and dreadful. It is, of course, seldom anything of the sort. The proceedings anterior to it are sometimes (though surely not always) painful, but death itself appears to be almost devoid of sensation, either psychic or physical. The candidate, facing it at last, simply loses his faculties. Death is no more to him than it is to a coccus. The dreadful, like the painful, is not in it. It is far more likely to show elements of the grotesque. I speak here, of course, of natural death. Suicide is plainly more unpleasant, if only because there is some uncertainty about it. The candidate hesitates to shoot himself because he fears, with some show of reason, that he may fail to kill himself, and only hurt himself. Moreover, this shooting, along with most of the other more

common aids to an artificial exitus, involves a kind of affront to his dignity: it is apt to make a mess. But that objection, it seems to me, is one that is bound to disappear with the progress of science. Safe, sure, easy and sanitary methods of departing this life will be invented. Some, in truth, are already known, and perhaps the fact explains the steady increase in suicides, so satisfactory to my mortician friend.

I pass over the theological objections to self-destruction as too transparently sophistical to be worth a serious answer. From the earliest days Christianity has depicted life on this earth as so sad and vain that its value is indistinguishable from that of a damn. Then why cling to it? Simply because its vanity and unpleasantness are parts of the will of a Creator whose love for His creatures takes the form of torturing them. If they revolt in this world they will be tortured a million times worse in the next. I present the argument as a typical specimen of theological reasoning, and proceed to more engaging themes. Specifically, to my original thesis: that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discover any evidential or logical reason, not instantly observed to be full of fallacy, for keeping alive. The fact that we nevertheless do it is no more than proof that reason is mainly only a sort of afterthought. I enjoy the effects of alcohol when I am sad. *Ergo,* all Prohibitionists are fools and most of them are scoundrels. Alcohol makes me ill

and killed my Uncle Emil. *Ergo,* it ought to be prohibited by law, as it is by the Holy Scriptures, though in a passage that, at the moment, I can't recall. I admire and enjoy Americans, particularly when they make asses of themselves. *Ergo,* any foreigner who essays to butcher them is a fiend from Hell. Americans fatigue me. *Ergo,* the same foreigner is a charming fellow.

But sometimes these second thoughts—and *all* thoughts are second thoughts—are unanimous, and then they become what is called universal wisdom. The universal wisdom of the world long ago concluded that life is mainly a curse. Turn to the proverbial philosophy of any race, and you will find it full of a sense of the futility of the mundane struggle. Anticipation is better than realization. Disappointment is the lot of man. We are born in pain and die in sorrow. The lucky man died a' Wednesday. He giveth His beloved sleep. I could run the list to pages. If you disdain folk-wisdom, secular or sacred, then turn to the immortal works of William Shakespeare. They drip with such pessimism from end to end. If there is any general idea in them, it is the idea that human existence is a painful futility. Out, out, brief candle!

Yet we cling to it in a muddled physiological sort of way—or, perhaps more accurately, in a pathological way—and even try to fill it with a gaudy hocus-

pocus. All men who, in any true sense, are sentient strive mightily for distinction and power, *i. e.*, for the respect and envy of their fellowmen, *i. e.*, for the ill-natured admiration of an endless series of miserable and ridiculous bags of rapidly disintegrating amino acids. Why? If I knew, I'd certainly not be writing books in this infernal American climate; I'd be sitting in state in a hall of crystal and gold, and people would be paying $10 a head to gape at me through peep-holes. But though the central mystery remains, it is possible, perhaps, to investigate the superficial symptoms to some profit. I offer myself as a laboratory animal. Why have I worked so hard for thirty years, desperately striving to accomplish something that remains impenetrable to me to this day? Is it because I desire money? Bosh! I can't recall ever desiring it for an instant: I have always found it easy to get all I wanted. Is it, then, notoriety that I am after? Again the answer must be no. The attention of strangers is unpleasant to me, and I avoid it as much as possible. Then is it a yearning to Do Good that moves me? Bosh and blah! If I am convinced of anything, it is that Doing Good is in bad taste.

Once I ventured the guess that men worked in response to a vague inner urge for self-expression. But that was probably a feeble theory, for some men who work the hardest have nothing to express. An hypothe-

sis with rather more plausibility in it now suggests itself. It is that men work simply in order to escape the depressing agony of contemplating life—that their work, like their play, is a mumbo-jumbo that serves them by permitting them to escape from reality. Both work and play, ordinarily, are illusions. Neither serves any solid and permanent purpose. If work has what is called value, then it only condemns more human beings to work. But life, stripped of such illusions, instantly becomes unbearable. Man cannot sit still, contemplating his destiny in this world, without going frantic. So he invents ways to take his mind off the horror. He works. He plays. He accumulates the preposterous nothing called property. He strives for the coy eye-wink called fame. He founds a family, and spreads his curse over others. All the while the thing that moves him is simply the yearning to lose himself, to forget himself, to escape the tragi-comedy that is himself. Life, fundamentally, is not worth living. So he confects artificialities to make it so. So he erects a gaudy structure to conceal the fact that it is *not* so.

Perhaps my talk of agonies and tragi-comedies may be a bit misleading. The basic fact about human existence is not that it is a tragedy, but that it is a bore. It is not so much a war as an endless standing in line. The objection to it is not that it is predominantly painful, but that it is lacking in sense. What is ahead

for the race? Even theologians, to whom devils are easily visible, can see nothing but a gray emptiness, with a burst of irrational fireworks at the end. But there is such a thing as human progress. True. It is the progress that a felon makes from the watch-house to the jail, and from the jail to the death-house. Every generation faces the same intolerable boredom.

I speak as one who has had what must be regarded, speaking statistically, as a happy life. I work a great deal, but working is more agreeable to me than anything else I can imagine. I am conscious of no vast, overwhelming and unattainable desires. I want nothing that I can't get. But it remains my conclusion, at the gate of senility, that the whole thing is a grandiose futility, and not even amusing. The end is always a vanity, and usually a sordid one, without any noble touch of the pathetic. The means remain. In them lies the secret of what is called contentment, *i. e.*, the capacity to postpone suicide for at least another day. They are themselves without meaning, but at all events they offer a way of escape from the paralyzing reality. The central aim of life is to simulate extinction. We have been yelling up the wrong rain-spout.

3

On Controversy

Any man engaged habitually in controversy, as I

have been for twenty years past, must enter upon his declining days with a melancholy sense of its hollowness and futility. Especially in this great Republic, where all ideas are suspect, it tends almost inevitably to degenerate into a mere exchange of nonsense. Have you ever examined carefully the speeches made by the candidates in a Presidential campaign? If so, you know that they are of bilge and blather all compact. Now and then, true enough, one of the august aspirants to the Washingtonian breeches is goaded or misled into saying something pungent and even apposite, but not often, not deliberately. His daily stint is simply balderdash.

It is rare, indeed, to encounter a controversialist who states his own case clearly, or who shows any sign of understanding his opponent's. Turn, for example, to the current combat between the Fundamentalists and the Modernists—an academic and puerile duel in our great Sodoms and Ninevehs, but raging like an oil fire in the Bible and Hookworm Belt, where men are he and Hell yawns. Both sides wallow in pishposh. The Fundamentalists, claiming a monopoly of faith, allege that they believe the whole Bible *verbatim et literatim*, which is not true, for at least 99 % of them reject Exodus XXII, 18, to say nothing of I Timothy v, 23. And the Modernists argue that there is no conflict between science and Holy Writ, which is even less true. This controversy, in

fact, is almost classical in character. Neither side is able to stick to the question at issue. Each tries to dispose of the other by delivering mighty wallops below the belt—the Fundamentalists by passing laws converting the Modernists into criminals (that is, as criminality is now defined by American jurisprudence), and the Modernists by depicting the Fundamentalists as a horde of gibbering baboons, sworn to uproot civilization and not above suspicion of cannibalism.

I have had a hand in this great battle of scattered wits myself, striving in an austere and lofty manner to introduce the sublime principles of Aristotle's "Organon" into it. I have got the traditional reward of one stopping to preach in front of a house afire. The more extreme Modernists—which is to say, the professional atheists,—discontented because I haven't advocated hanging the Fundamentalists, denounce me as a Crypto-Calvinist, and hold me up to obloquy in their papers. The Fundamentalists, suspecting me of a partiality for Darwin, accuse me of trying to upset the Ten Commandments, and one of the most eminent of them lately hinted that I have personally had a bout with No. 7, and come to grief in the manner described by the late Dr. Sylvanus Stall, in his well-known work on pathology, "What Every Boy of Fourteen Should Know." This last accusation was novel, but, as they run in such affairs,

very mild. The usual charge against an opponent, in the America of to-day, is that he is a Bolshevist, and in receipt of traitor's gold. It has been leveled at me so often that probably a majority of the persons who have heard of me at all believe it, and there are even dismal days when I half believe it myself, though I have been denouncing Socialism publicly for twenty years, and am, in fact, an incurable Tory in politics. A short while ago a Boston critic, becoming aware of the latter fact by some miracle, at once proceeded to denounce me because my radicalism, as he thought he had discovered, was bogus.

During the decade 1910–1920 I was chiefly engaged in literary controversies, and so my politics were aside from the issue. But when the great wave of idealism engulfed the United States in 1917, I was at once bawled out as a German spy, and open demands were made that my purely æsthetic heresies be put down by the *Polizei*. One of my opponents, in those days, was an eminent college professor, now unhappily deceased. He not only attempted to dispose of my literary judgments by arguing that they were inspired by the Kaiser; he even made the same charge against the works of the writers I was currently whooping up. And so did many of his learned colleagues. It was not easy to meet this onslaught by logical devices; logic, in those days, was completely adjourned, along with the Bill of Rights. Moreover,

there was a considerable plausibility in the general charge. So I attempted no defense; it is, indeed, against my nature to take the defensive. Instead, I launched into an elaborate effort to prove that all college professors, regardless of their politics, were hollow and preposterous asses, and to this business I brought up all the ancient and horrifying devices of the art of rhetoric.

The issue of the controversy was characteristic: thus all combats in the realm of so-called ideas end. The moment the War to End War was over there came a revulsion against its blather, and so it was no longer damaging to me to be accused of taking the money of the Hohenzollern. Thus the professor I have mentioned suddenly found his principal ammunition gone, and in an effort to unearth more he began reading the books I had been advocating. To his surprise he found that many of them were works of high merit, whereupon he began whooping for them himself, and even going beyond my loudest hurrahs. In the end he was actually searching them for evidences of Teutonic influence, and hailing it with enthusiasm when found! His poor fellow-professors, meanwhile, were the goats. I ceased to revile them, once the war was over, and devoted myself mainly to political and moral concerns, but various other controversialists took up the jehad where I left off, and in a short time it was raging from coast to coast.

It got far beyond anything I had myself dreamed of. Indignant publicists, quite unknown to me, began grouping all professors with chiropractors, Congressmen and spiritualists. In dozens of colleges large and small, North, East, South and West, the students began holding meetings and flinging insults at their tutors. Scores of college papers, for flouting them in contumacious terms, had to be suppressed. In several great institutions of learning the thing actually reached the form of physical assault. When the smoke cleared away the professor, once so highly respected by every one, found himself a sort of questionable character, and he remains so to this day. In many cases, I believe, he actually is, but surely not in all. The point is that the virtuous have suffered with the guilty. Many an honest and God-fearing professor, laboriously striving to ram his dismal nonsense into the progeny of Babbitts, is bombarded with ribald spit-balls as a result of a controversy which begun quite outside his ken and speedily got far beyond the issue between the original combatants.

Such are the ways of war in the psychic field. Why they should be so I don't know, but so they are. No controversy to my knowledge has ever ended on the ground where it began. Even the historic one between Huxley and Wilberforce, two of the most eminent men of their time in England, ranged all over the landscape before the contestants had enough.

It began with Huxley trying to prove that Darwin's "Origin of Species" was a sound book; it ended with Bishop Wilberforce trying to prove that Huxley's grandfather was a gorilla. What was its issue? Did Huxley convert Wilberforce? Did Wilberforce make any dent in the armor of Huxley? I apologize for wasting your time with silly rhetorical questions. Did Luther convert Leo X? Did Grant convert Lee?

16

On Faith

Some time ago I received a letter from a learned Socialist, once very active in the movement, but long since retired. It was stuffed with circulars advertising a new sure cure for all human ills, from belly-ache to cancer. This invention, the Socialist assured me, was no fake. He had personally seen it snatch back men and women from the brink of the grave. It would be in use everywhere, he said, and saving hundreds of thousands of lives a year, if it were not for the hellish conspiracies of the American Medical Association.

It all seemed familiar. More, it all seemed quite natural. For who has ever heard of a Socialist who did not also believe in some other quackery? I have known all of the principal gladiators of the move-

ment in my time, at least in America; I have yet to meet one who was not as gullible as a Mississippi darkey, nay, even a Mississippi white man. Didn't Karl Marx himself carry a madstone and believe in astrology? If not, then it was strange indeed. Didn't Debs believe that quinine would cure a cold? If not, then he was not a genuine Socialist.

The leading living Socialist of this great Republic is Upton Sinclair. Perhaps, indeed, he is the only leader the movement has left, for Debs is dead, and most of the rest leaped down the sewers during the late war. Well, Sinclair believes in so many different kinds of nonsense that he needs two thick volumes to record them. He was one of the earliest believers in the fasting cure for catarrh, and he was one of the first dupes to be roped in by the late Dr. Albert Abrams, the San Francisco swindler. I do not hold all this against Sinclair: he is a charming fellow otherwise. I merely say that such credulity is natural to Socialists. Turn to England, where one of the late heroes of the movement is young Oliver Baldwin, son of the Prime Minister. Some time ago the Associated Press was reporting from London that Oliver had taken to spiritualism and was hearing "spirit voices coming from all parts of the room in no fewer than five languages."

As I have said, practically all of the more eminent Socialists of the United States took to the sewers in

1917. When the gun-men of the Hon. A. Mitchell Palmer began rounding up the lesser comrades, and pliant Federal judges began sending them to Atlanta for five, ten and twenty years, the high-toned members of the movement saw a great light, and began to bawl and sob for the flag. Now, with the danger over, they can't get back: the surviving comrades won't have anything to do with them, and even denounce them bitterly as scabs. But if the Marxian grove is thus closed to them, there is plenty of room for them around other flambeaux, and all of them seem to be crowding up. A considerable number, in 1920, became violent Prohibitionists, and began predicting that the country would be bone-dry in two years. Others became chiropractors. Yet others announced that they were converted to the League of Nations. Many became spiritualists, and a few, I believe, followed Sinclair in succumbing to Dr. Abrams. The rest went in for free love, Fundamentalism, mental telepathy, the Harding idealism, Texas oil stocks, numerology, the poetry of T. S. Eliot, the music of Eric Satie, or the ouija board. One or two became professional sorcerers. The point is that every last one of them found some sort of satisfaction and solace for the imperative need of his nature—every one found something outlandish and preposterous to believe in. For all of them, as ex-Socialists, had believing minds. They could get

rid of their Socialism, especially when helped by the *Polizei,* but they could no more get rid of their believing minds than they could get rid of the shapes of their heads. A Socialist, in brief, is simply a man suffering from an overwhelming compulsion to believe what is not true. He yearns for it as a cow yearns for the milkmaid, lowing in the cool of the evening. He pines for it as a dry Congressman pines for a drink.

Of all the things that are palpably not true Socialism is one of the most satisfying to men of that romantic kidney, and so nine-tenths of them, at one time or another in their lives, are Socialists, or, if not Socialists, then at least Progressives, or Single Taxers, or evangelists of Farm Relief. But Socialism, though it is sweet, is never enough for them, and neither is the Single Tax. They always reach out for something else. They always succumb to some other and worse Marx, with longer whiskers and dirtier finger-nails. Years ago, when the Single Taxers were still making a noise in the land, I made a roster of the princes of the movement, setting down beside each name the varieties of balderdash that its owner believed in. There was not a single name without two entries and some of them had a dozen. One of the leading Single Taxers was also president of the League for Medical Freedom, a verein of quacks organized to oppose vaccination. Another was a

militant anti-vivisectionist, and proposed that the Johns Hopkins Medical School be closed by the police. A third was an anthropophagous atheist of the kind that proselytes, especially among peaceable old ladies. A third was a table-tapper, and a fourth got messages from the ghosts of Martin Luther, Lucy Stone and Sitting Bull. A fifth deserted his wife for a cutie with pansy eyes, and lost, in consequence, his job as a college professor. A sixth, believing that he was Millard Fillmore, was put away by his family.

What lies beneath all this is simply an ancient fact, noted long ago by William James, and before him by Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, and before him by the Greeks, and before the Greeks by the first human politicians. It is the fact that the race of men is divided sharply into two classes: those who are what James called tough-minded, and demand proofs before they will believe, and those who are what he called tender-minded, and are willing to believe anything that seems to be pleasant. It is the tender-minded who keep quacks of all sorts well-fed and active, and hence vastly augment the charm of this world. They find it wholly impossible to distinguish between what is subjectively agreeable and what is objectively true. Would it be nice if the whole world turned sober overnight, and even flappers put away the jug? If so, then there must be a quick and sure way to accomplish it. Does Prohibition promise to

do so? If so, then Prohibition must be true. This is precisely the route by which Sinclair became a Prohibitionist—one of his follies that I forgot to mention above. And this is the route by which multitudes of his tender-hearted brethren and sistren followed him into the jaws of the Anti-Saloon League.

Socialism, while it was still vague and untested, appealed powerfully to all such persons. Fifteen or twenty years ago it was making immense progress in the United States, vice Free Silver, deceased. All the young college professors, in those days, were Socialists, as they are now eugenists and birth controllers. It swept and enchanted the tender-minded. Fat women wept over it, as they now weep over the Armenians. But one day it collided slambang with the harsh and horrible facts. One day it was put to the test in Russia,—and promptly blew up. Even the tender-minded could not dodge the appalling proofs. So they fled in this direction and that. Some took to spiritualism, some to chiropractic, some to Genesis. Some, like Sinclair, took to Prohibition, the Single Tax, fasting, and the electronic vibrations of Dr. Abrams. But not one, so far as I can make out, took to sense.

IV. CLARION CALL TO POETS

ONE of the crying needs of the time in this incomparable Republic—the goal and despair of all other and hence lesser states—is for a suitable Burial Service for the admittedly damned. I speak as one who has of late attended the funeral orgies of several such gentlemen, each time to my æsthetic distress. The first of these gentlemen, having a great abhorrence of rhetoric in all its branches, left strict orders that not a word was to be said at his obsequies. The result was two extremely chilly and uncomfortable moments: when six of us walked into his house in utter silence and carried out his clay, and when we shoved it, in the same crawling silence, into the yawning fire-box of the crematory. The whole business was somehow unnatural and even a shade indecent: it violated one of the most ancient sentiments of *Homo sapiens* to dispatch so charming a fellow in so cavalier a fashion. One felt almost irresistibly impelled to say good-by to him in some manner or other, if only, soldier fashion, by blowing a bugle and rolling a drum. Even the mortician, an eminent star of one of

the most self-possessed of professions, looked a bit uneasy and ashamed.

The second funeral was even worse. The deceased had been a Socialist of the militantly anti-clerical variety, and threatened, on his death-bed, to leap from his coffin with roars if a clergyman were hired to snuffle over him. His widow accordingly asked two of his Socialist colleagues to address the mourners. They prepared for the business by resorting to a bootlegger, and in consequence both of them were garrulous and injudicious. One of them traced the career of Karl Marx in immense detail, and deduced from it a long series of lessons for ambitious American boys. The other, after first denouncing the New York *Times*, read twenty or thirty cantos of execrable poetry from the *Freethinker*. If the widow had not performed a series of very realistic sobs—leaning for support, I may add, upon a comrade who soon afterward succeeded to the rights of the deceased in her person and real estate—the ceremony would have been indistinguishable from a session of the House of Representatives.

The third funeral was conducted by Freemasons, who came in plug hats and with white aprons over their cow-catchers. They entered the house of mourning in a long file, with their hats held over their left breasts in the manner of a President reviewing an inaugural parade, and filed past the open coffin at a

brisk parade march. As each passed he gave a swift, mechanical glance at the fallen brother: there was in it the somewhat metallic efficiency of an old hand. These Freemasons brought their own limousines and took a place in the funeral procession ahead of the hearse. At the cemetery they deployed around the grave, and as soon as the clergyman had finished his mumbo-jumbo, began a ceremonial of their own. Their leader, standing at the head of the grave with his plug hat on, first read a long series of quasi-theological generalities—to the general effect, so far as I could make out, that Freemasons are immune to Hell, as they are notoriously immune to hanging—, and then a brother at the foot of the grave replied. After that there was a slight pause, and in rather ragged chorus the rest of the brethren said "So mote it be!" This went on almost endlessly; I was heartily glad when it was over. The whole ceremony, in fact, was tedious and trashy. As for me, I'd rather have been planted by a Swedenborgian, whiskers and all. Or even by a grand goblin of the Ethical Culture Society.

What is needed, and what I bawl for politely, is a service that is free from the pious but unsupported asseverations that revolt so many of our best minds, and yet remains happily graceful and consoling. It will be very hard, I grant you, to concoct anything as lasciviously beautiful as the dithyrambs in the

Book of Common Prayer. Who wrote them originally I don't know, but whoever did it was a poet. They put the highly improbable into amazingly luscious words, and the palpably not-true into words even more caressing and disarming. It is impossible to listen to them, when they are intoned by a High Church rector of sepulchral gifts, without harboring a sneaking wish that, by some transcendental magic, they could throw off their lowly poetical character and take on the dignity and reliability of prose—in other words, that the departed could be actually imagined as leaping out of the grave on the Last Morn, his split colloids all restored to their pristine complexity, his clothes neatly scoured and pressed, and every molecule of him thrilling with a wild surmise. I have felt this wish at the funerals of many virtuous and earnest brethren, whose sole sin was their refusal to swallow such anecdotes as the one in II Kings II, 23–24. It seems a pity that men of that sort should be doomed to Hell, and it seems an even greater pity that they should be laid away to the banal chin-music of humorless Freemasons and stewed Socialists.

But, so far as I know, no suitable last rites for them have ever been drawn up. Between the service in the Book of Common Prayer (and its various analogues, nearly all of them greatly inferior) and the maudlin mortuary dialogues of the Freemasons, Ku

Kluxers, Knights of Pythias and other such assassins of beauty there is absolutely nothing. Even the professional agnostics, who are violently literary, have never produced anything worthy to be considered; their best is indistinguishable from the text of a flag-drill or high-school pageant. Thus the average American skeptic, when his time comes to return to earth, is commonly turned off with what, considering his prejudices, may be best described as a razzing. His widow, disinclined to risk scandal by burying him without any ceremonies at all, calls in the nearest clergyman, and the result is a lamentable comedy, creditable neither to honest faith nor to honest doubt. More than once, in attendance upon such an affair, I have observed a sardonic glitter in the eye of the pastor, especially when he came to the unequivocal statement that the deceased would infallibly rise again. Did he secretly doubt it? Or was he poking fun at a dead opponent, now persuaded of the truth of revelation at last? In either case there was something unpleasant in the spectacle. A suitable funeral for doubters, full of lovely poetry but devoid of any specific pronouncement on the subject of a future life, would make such unpleasantness unnecessary.

We have the poets for the job, and I incline to suspect that their private theological ideas fit them for it. Skepticism, in fact, runs with their cynical trade. Most Americans, as every one knows, give their

ecclesiastical affiliations in "Who's Who in America" —especially Congressmen, pedagogues, bank presidents and uplifters. But not the poets. The sole exception, so far as I can make out, is Vachel Lindsay, who reports that he is a member of the "Christian (Disciples) Church," a powerful sect in the No-More-Scrub-Bulls Belt, with a private Hell of its own, deep and hot. Even Edgar Albert Guest is silent on the subject, though he mentions the fact that he is a 33° Mason. Frost, Robinson, Sandburg and Masters keep suspiciously mum. I suggest that they meet in some quiet saloon and draw up the ritual I advocate. Let Masters be chairman of the committee: he is a lawyer as well as a poet, and may be trusted to keep within the statutes. And let Edna St. Vincent Millay be added to give the thing a refined voluptuousness, and James Weldon Johnson to put music into it, that it may be intoned without getting the celebrant out of breath. Here Holy Church shows the way. Its funeral service is a great deal less forensic than operatic.

There is some need, too, for a Marriage Service for the damned, and at different times attempts have been made to supply it. But all such works seem to emanate from radicals showing a characteristic lack of humor—and humor is as necessary to a Marriage Service as poetry is to a Funeral Service: a fact that the astute authors of the Book of Common Prayer

did not overlook. However, the need here is not pressing, for in most American States civil marriage is sufficient, and heretics may be safely united without going before a sorcerer at all. Court clerks and police magistrates perform the job, mumbling unintelligibly out of a mysterious book, perhaps only a stolen Gideon Bible, excavated to hold cigarettes. The main thing is to pay the fee. Marriages after midnight cost double, and if the bridegroom has the fumes of wine in his head, he is apt to lose his watch as well as his liberty.

As I say, the Marriage Services drawn up by antinomians for the use of unbelievers lack humor. Worse, they are full of indignation—against the common theory that a wife is bound to give some care to her husband's goods, against the convention that she shall adopt his surname, and so on. It is hard to give serious attention to such grim notions at a time immemorially viewed as festive and jocose. One hears frequently of wedding guests getting drunk and fighting—not long ago a Methodist pastor in Missouri was protesting against it publicly—, but when they are drawn into sociological controversy it is too much. Such revolutionary Marriage Services, in point of fact, have never gained much popularity. Now and then a pair of Socialists resorts to one, but even Socialists appear to prefer the harsh, mechanical offices of a court clerk.

Nor is there any active demand for a non-theological Baptismal Service. I am constantly amazed, as a bachelor, by the number of children growing up, in these iconoclastic modern days, without any formal naming at all. Not only do heretics spurn the ceremony; even professing Christians often neglect it. In my own nonage practically all babies, at least of the more respectable tribes of the race, were christened. There was a general feeling that failing to put them through the sacrament was, in some obscure way, a tort against them—that it would bring them bad luck, and perhaps lead to difficulties in after life. It is so believed to this day nearly everywhere in Europe, and for sound reasons. Whenever a citizen in those decaying lands comes into contact with the state, which is very often, its agents demand his baptismal certificate as well as his birth certificate. So far, the imbeciles at Washington have not come to that, but it must be plain that they will come to it soon or late, and when the time is finally upon us there will be trouble for all those Americanos whose naming is now trusted to acclamation. They will have to dig up senile aunts and uncles, and produce affidavits that they were known to every one as so-and-so at some date far in the past, just as they now have to get such affidavits, more often than not, when they want passports. The bureaucracy grinds slowly, but it grinds exceeding fine. Recruited from the mentally

deficient, it runs to circular insanities. Let it be proved to-morrow that some John Doe, suspected of favoring the recognition of Russia, was actually baptized Johannes, and it will be sufficient excuse for a regulation requiring all of us to prove that we are legally entitled to the names we sign to checks.

But all these are side issues. The main thing is that the poets, though most of them seem to have departed from the precincts and protection of Holy Church and her schismatic colonies—since when has a first-rate American poet written a hymn?—have failed, so far, to rise to the occasion when, even among heretics, poets are most pressingly needed. I have suggested that they meet in some convenient speak-easy and remedy the lack gloriously, but I don't insist, of course, that their service for the doubting dead be wholly original. The authors of the Book of Common Prayer, though they were poets of great talent, certainly did not trust only to their private inspiration. They borrowed copiously from the old missals, and they borrowed, too, directly from Holy Writ. What they concocted finally was a composite, but it was very discreetly and delicately put together, and remains impregnable to this day, despite many furious efforts to undo it.

All I propose is that the committee of poets imitate them, but with an avoidance of strophes objectionable in doctrine. Isn't there material enough in the

books? There is enough, and to spare. I point to the works of Walt Whitman, now at last passing freely through the mails—to those parts, of course, of a non-erotic and non-political nature. I point to certain memorable stanzas of William Cullen Bryant. I point to Blake, Tennyson, Milton, Shelley, Keats, even Swinburne; what gaudy stuff for the purpose is in "Ave Atque Vale," "Tristram of Lyonesse" and "Atalanta in Calydon!" There is here a sweet soothing, a healing reassurance, a divine booziness—in brief, all the stuff of A No. 1 poetry. It would bring comfort, I believe, to many a poor widow who now groans as the Freemasons intone their balderdash, or flounces her veil, fidgets and blushes as a Socialist orator denounces Omnipotence for permitting stock dividends—it would bring her a great deal more comfort, certainly, than the positive statement, made defiantly by the unwilling rector of the parish, that her departed John, having been colloidal and as the beasts, has now become gaseous and immortal. Such a libretto for the inescapable last act would be humane and valuable. I renew my suggestion that the poets spit upon their hands and confect it at once.

V. SOUVENIRS OF A BOOK REVIEWER

1

The Emperor of Wowsers

ANTHONY COMSTOCK: ROUNDSMAN OF THE LORD, by Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech. New York: *Albert & Charles Boni.* [Books, March 6, 1927.]

IN an appendix to this amusing and instructive work, Mr. Broun states the case against comstockery in a neat, realistic and unanswerable manner, but the book itself is by no means a philippic against old Anthony. On the contrary, it deals with him in a very humane and even ingratiating way. And why not? He was, in point of fact, a man of manifold virtues, and even his faults showed a rugged, Berserker quality that was sneakingly charming. It is quite impossible, at this distance, to doubt his *bona fides,* and almost as difficult, despite his notorious extravagances, to question his essential sanity. Like all the rest of us in our several ways, he was simply a damned fool. Starting out in life with an idea lying well within the bounds of what most men would call

the rational, he gradually pumped it up until it bulged over all four borders. But he never departed from it altogether; he never let go his hold upon logic; he never abandoned reason for mere intuition. Once his premisses were granted, the only way to escape his conclusions was to forsake Aristotle for Epicurus. Such logical impeccability, as all connoisseurs must know, is very common among theologians; they hold, indeed, almost a monopoly of it. The rest of us, finding that our ratiocination is leading us into uncomfortable waters, give it the slip and return to dry land. But not the theologians. They have horribly literal minds; they are less men than intellectual machines. I defy any one to find a logical flaw in their proofs of the existence of Hell. They demonstrate it magnificently and irrefutably. Do multitudes of wise men nevertheless deny it? Then that is only because very few wise men have any honest belief in the reality of the thing that the theologians and other logicians call truth.

Mr. Broun, in his appendix, tries to find holes in Anthony's logic, but it turns out to be far from easy: what he arrives at, in the end, is mainly only proof that a logician is an immensely unpleasant fellow. Turn, for example, to a typical and very familiar comstockian syllogism. First premiss: The effect of sexual images, upon the young, is to induce auto-erotism. Second premiss: the effects of auto-erotism

are idiocy, epilepsy and locomotor ataxia. *Ergo,* now is the time for all good men to put down every book or picture likely to evoke sexual images. What is wrong with all this? Simply that Mr. Broun and you and I belong to a later generation than Anthony's, and are thus skeptical of his premisses. But let us not forget that they were true for him. His first came out of the hard, incontrovertible experience of a Puritan farm-boy, in executive session behind the barn. His second was supported, when he was getting his education, by the almost unanimous medical opinion of Christendom. And so his conclusion was perfect. We have made no progress in logic since his time; we have simply made progress in skepticism. All his grand truths are now dubious, and most of them are laughed at even by sucklings.

I think that he himself had a great deal to do with upsetting them. The service that he performed, in his grandiose way, was no more than a magnification of the service that is performed every day by multitudes of humble Y. M. C. A. secretaries, evangelical clergymen, and other such lowly fauna. It is their function in the world to ruin their ideas by believing in them and living them. Striving sincerely to be patterns to the young, they suffer the ironical fate of becoming horrible examples. I remember very well, how, as a boy of ten, I was articled to the Y. M. C. A.: the aim was to improve my taste for respectability, and so

curb my apparently natural flair for the art and mystery of the highwayman. But a few months of contact with the official representatives of that great organization filled me with a vast loathing, not only for the men themselves, but also for all the ideas they stood for. Thus, at the age of eleven, I abandoned Christian Endeavor forevermore, and have been an antinomian ever since, contumacious to holy men and resigned to Hell. Old Anthony, I believe, accomplished much the same thing that the Y. M. C. A. achieved with me, but on an immeasurably larger scale. He did more than any other man to ruin Puritanism in the United States. When he began his long and brilliant career of unwitting sabotage, the essential principles of comstockery were believed in by practically every reputable American. Half a century later, when he went upon the shelf, comstockery enjoyed a degree of public esteem, at least in the big cities, half way between that enjoyed by phrenology and that enjoyed by homosexuality. It was, at best, laughable. It was, at worst, revolting.

So much did one consecrated man achieve in the short span of his life. I believe that it was no mean accomplishment. Anthony managed it, not because there was any unusual ability in him, but simply because he had a congenital talent for giving shows. The fellow, in his way, was a sort of Barnum. A band

naturally followed him, playing in time to his yells. He could not undertake even so banal a business as raiding a dealer in abortifacient pills without giving it the melodramatic air of a battle with a brontosaurus. So a crowd always followed him, and when he made a colossal ass of himself, which was very frequently, the fact was bruited about. Years of such gargantuan endeavor made him one of the national clowns—and his cause one of the national jokes. In precisely the same way, I believe, such gaudy zanies as the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday and the Rev. John Roach Straton are ruining the evangelical demonology in the Bible Belt. They make so much uproar that no one can fail to notice them. The young peasants, observing them, are gradually enlightened by them—unintentionally, but none the less surely. The men themselves are obviously charlatans; *ergo*, their ideas must be fraudulent too. What has been the net effect of the Scopes trial, with its solemn martyrdom of William Jennings Bryan? Its chief effect seems to be that societies of young atheists are now flourishing in all the Southern colleges. Has the study of Darwin been put down? Far from it. Darwin is now being read below the Potomac, and by the flower of Christian youth, as assiduously as "Only a Boy" used to be read in New York in the great days of Anthony's historic offensive against it.

Comstockery, of course, still lives, but it must be

manifest that its glories have greatly faded. There is, anon, a series of raids and uproars, but they soon pass, and the work of the Devil goes on. It would be hard to imagine Anthony taking orders from district attorneys, or going into amicable conference with his enemies (and God's), or consenting to the appointment of joint committees (mainly made up of obvious anti-Puritans) to discover and protect the least dirty among the dirty plays of Broadway; he would have raided them all, single-handed and alone. His heirs and assigns are far milder men, and hence, I sometimes fear, more dangerous. Their sweet reasonableness is disarming; it tends to conceal the fact that they are nevertheless blue-noses at heart, and quite as eager to harry and harass the rest of us as Anthony was. Those opponents who now parley with them had better remember the warning against making truces with Adam-Zad. They may end by restoring to comstockery some of its old respectability, and so throw us back to where we were during the Grant administration. I sound the warning and pass on. It will take, at best, a long time, and I'll be beyond all hope or caring before it is accomplished. For Anthony's ghost still stalks the scenes of his old endeavors, to plague and palsy his successors. His name has given a term of opprobrium to the common tongue. Dead, and—as Mr. Broun and Miss Leech so beautifully suggest, an angel with harp, wings and muttonchops—he is yet

as alive as Pecksniff, Chadband or Elmer Gantry.

Well, here is his story, done fully, competently, and with excellent manners. There is much in it that you will not find in the earlier biography by Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, for Trumbull wrote for the Sunday-schools, and so had to do a lot of pious dodging and snuffling. The additional facts that Mr. Broun and Miss Leech set forth are often very amusing, but I must add at once that they are seldom discreditable. Old Anthony was preposterous, but not dishonest. He believed in his idiotic postulates as devotedly as a Tennessee Baptist believes that a horse-hair put into a bottle of water will turn into a snake. His life, as he saw it, was one of sacrifice for righteousness. Born with a natural gift for the wholesale drygoods trade, he might have wrung a fortune from its practice, and so won an heroic equestrian statue in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Perhaps there were blue days when regret crept over him, shaking his Christian resolution. His muttonchop whiskers, the stigma and trademark of the merchant princes of his era, had a pathetic, Freudian smack. But I don't think he wobbled often. The Lord was always back of him, guiding and stimulating his fighting arm. So he was content to live in a drab suburb on the revenues of a second-rate lawyer, with his elderly, terrified wife and his half-witted foster-daughter. There was never any hint, in that humble home, of the gaudy connu-

bial debaucheries that the modern sex hygienists describe so eloquently. Anthony had to go outside for his fun. Comstockery was his corner saloon.

I confess to a great liking for the old imbecile. He is one of my favorite characters in American history, along with Frances E. Willard, Daniel Drew and Brigham Young. He added a great deal to the joys of life in the Federal Republic. More than any other man, he liberated American letters from the blight of Puritanism.

2

Thwacks From the Motherland

THE BABBITT WARREN, by C. E. M. Joad. New York: *Harper & Brothers.* [The Nation, April 20, 1927.]

Mr. Joad, who is a philosopher by trade, prefaces his thunderous philippic against all things Yankee and accursed with a disarming quotation from the late Filippo G. Bruno, of Nola, Italy: "*Se non è vero, è ben trovato.*" He needs this plea in confession and avoidance, and very badly, for he admits frankly that he "has not had the privilege of visiting the United States," and the fact is visible on almost every page of his book. Much of the evidence he relies on, indeed, seems to have been derived from the travelers' tales of returning English actors and the confidences

of the more humorous and ingenious members of the corps of cabin-stewards of the Cunard line. Thus, on page 83, he begins a long diatribe with the postulate that "the films are the literature of America"—which is to say, the *only* literature—and on page 89 he permits himself the grave announcement that the lamented J. Gordon Cooglar was "the one famous Southern American poet." The one criterion of eminence in the Republic, according to the agents he appears to trust, is money. "The artist, the scientist, the musician, the statesman, and the author are held of no account unless their claims to consideration are backed by money." A rich man, regardless of his private virtue, "is king of any company he chooses to enter." This preëminence, it seems, takes on a transcendental character, and so works miracles. "Thus a rich man who had lost his eye recently purchased another from a poor man, the transfer of optics being hailed as a marvel of medical science." And no wonder!

But it is not necessary to swallow all of Mr. Joad's evidence in order to discuss his conclusions. They are, in brief, that the machine civilization which now threatens the whole world has reached its highest development in the United States, that the influence of American gold is rapidly extending it, and that if its proliferation is not checked it will destroy most of the values that men have cherished for ten thou-

sand years. I see nothing against reason here. The facts, in truth, are apparent to every one, and even some of the most startling testimony that Mr. Joad introduces, though it is not true, is at least consonant with what is. We have surely not yet come to the pass that "a rich man is king of any company he chooses to enter," but we have certainly developed a respect for bare money which goes far beyond the bounds of the seemly and ordinate. I know of no other country in which the hollow imbecilities of a Judge Gary would get the respect they got here, nor in which so preposterous a vacuum as Andy Mellon would be venerated as a great statesman. The English also bend the knee to men of money, and so do the Germans and the French, but they have not yet come to the point of mistaking them for philosophers. The English had a fair chance to venerate Otto H. Kahn, but seem to have muffed him. The Germans, I fear, if Charlie Schwab went to live and make speeches among them, would regard him as a comic character. Even the Portuguese, Serbs, Rumanians, and Greeks would probably laugh at Cal.

Thus Mr. Joad is often right in essence, even when he is wrong in his specification. It is not true, literally, that J. Gordon Cooglar was "the one famous Southern American poet," but nevertheless there is an inner plausibility in the dictum that makes it somehow disconcerting: if the majority of Southern fanciers had

their way it *would* be true. Similarly, it is not true, literally, that the dreadful bilge of the movie-parlors is the only American literature now in being, but there remains an uncomfortable possibility that it may be true on some not distant to-morrow. Try to put together a list of American imaginative authors, all of the first chop, who have never taken the film shilling. I can think of Cabell and Sherwood Anderson, but there I begin to wabble; the complete roster is surely not long. The rest of the scrivening boys and girls have all submitted to the loathsome embraces of the Hollywood art-fosterers. The effects of this psychic fornication are not concealed from Mr. Joad's eyes. The movie rubber-stamp, he observes, begins to show itself upon even the swellest varieties of our national swell letters. The self-same novelists who, but a decade and a half ago, swore upon Alps of Bibles (and meant it) that they'd never yield to the foul caresses of Hamilton Wright Mabie and Anthony Comstock—these same novelists, planning their masterpieces to-day, find it a sheer impossibility to rid themselves of sneaking, Freudian thoughts of Gloria Swanson and Jack Gilbert. It is sad, but it is *vero*.

Such sadnesses fill Mr. Joad's tome—an instructive work, but extremely depressing. Purge it of all its errors of fact—some of them really shocking—and its general thesis remains defensible. More, its general thesis remains a fair statement of the view of the

Republic held by civilized Europeans. That view is not only critical; it is downright indignant. We are, it appears, not only a nation of barbarians; we are actually hard to distinguish from criminals. Unless we are dissuaded from our course by remonstrance, and, if remonstrance fails, by a resort to *force majeure*, the civilization that men have been struggling for since the dawn of history will go to pot. The wisdom of the late Gary will supplant that of Plato and Aristotle; Henry Ford will displace Thucydides; Luther and St. Francis will be shelved for the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday and the beauteous Aimée Semple McPherson; the epic and the sonnet will be alike engulfed by the scenario; and the whole world will read the *Saturday Evening Post*. I do not argue that these transformations would ruin humanity, or that they are sure to come to pass; I merely report that a fear of them is widespread in the world. Mr. Joad simply puts into a convenient book, weighing exactly one pound (it is printed on feather-weight paper), what gnaws at the hearts of hundreds of thousands of the European *intelligentsia*. One cannot pick up an English newspaper without getting some flavor of that dread and indignation. It is an ironical situation, and no doubt full of lessons for specialists in the historical and ethical sciences. The Yankee saved civilization, and now civilization damns him to Hell. He put down the accursed Hun, and now the Hun, com-

pared to him, becomes an archangel. As a professional patriot I resent all this. But on days when my patriotism passes a dividend I confess that I am consoled by certain *pizzicato* snickers, or, as they say in the Motherland, sniggers.

3

The Powers of the Air

THE HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT AND DEMONOLOGY, by Montague Summers. New York: *Alfred A. Knopf.* [The American Mercury, May, 1927.]

This tome is learned, honest and amusing. Its author, an English clergyman—his full name is the Rev. Alphonsus Joseph-Mary Augustus Montague, M.A.—wastes no time trying to reconcile religion and science, a folly that has brought so many American scientists, including the eminent but mushy Dr. Robert Andrews Millikan, to grief. He is in favor of religion, not of science, and with it, in the manner of a true believer, he goes the whole hog. Does Exodus XXII, 18, say flatly that witches exist, and that it is the duty of every righteous man to butcher them when found? Then Dr. Summers accepts the fact and the duty without evasion, and proceeds to elaborate on both. He can't imagine a Christian who refuses to believe in demoniacal possession, and no more can I. Marshaling an array of proofs that must shake even

an atheistic archbishop, he demonstrates with fine eloquence and impeccable logic that the air is full of sinister spirits, and that it is their constant effort to enter into the bodies of men and women, and so convert good Christians, made in God's image, into witches, sorcerers, spiritualists, biologists, and other such revolting shapes. The Bible is the rock of his argument, but he also makes frequent and very effective use of the revelations vouchsafed to Holy Church. There has never been a time in Christian history, he shows, when its chief experts and wiseacres did not believe in demons. The Roman rite, accepting their existence as indubitable, provides elaborate machinery for their scotching to this day. That machinery, to be sure, is not put into effect lightly. So long as the medical faculty is convinced that the patient is suffering from nothing worse than a leaping tapeworm or delirium tremens, and hope of his cure by chemical and mechanical means is thus held out, he is resigned to the secular arm. But once it becomes manifest that a fiend or goblin has got into him, the business becomes a matter for supernatural intervention, and the subsequent proceedings must be carried on by an ordained pastor, and according to a formula set forth in the "Rituale Romanum," and in use since the pontificate of Peter I.

This formula is extremely complicated, and I suspect that using it must be somewhat fatiguing to the

officiating clergyman. He must be himself a man of mature years, guiltless of anything even approaching loose living, and, according to Mr. Summers, "a systematic student, and well versed in the latest trends and developments of psychological science." He is required to make himself quite sure, before he begins his exorcism, that the patient before him is actually possessed by a demon—that he is not confronting a mere case of insanity, or, worse still, imposture. Once convinced, he proceeds with the utmost heat and diligence, never relenting until the unclean spirit takes wing, and so returns to Hell. Mr. Summers gives the words of the exorcism, translated into English; they are so terrifying that I hesitate to reprint them in a volume designed for reading aloud at the domestic hearth. The demon is denounced in words that sting like scorpions: no Baptist pastor, damning Clarence Darrow, ever scorched the air with worse. And if, at the first attack, they fail to dislodge him, they are to be used again, and then again, and so on until the exorcism is completed. The patient, it appears, is apt to fall asleep while they are being intoned: making him do so is one of the Devil's favorite tricks. If it happens, then the exorcist must awaken him, and by any device that seems workable, including smart blows *a posteriori.* Ordinarily, all this must be done in a church, but if the patient is too ill to leave his bed the exorcist may

visit him in his own boarding-house. Idle spectators are forbidden, but the canon requires that, as at a baptism or electrocution, a number of official witnesses, of known piety and sober mien, shall be present. No unnecessary conversation with the demon is permitted. If he speaks through the mouth of the patient, he is to be heard politely, but when he has had a sufficient say he is to be shut off. In particular, he is not to be permitted to indulge in ribaldries.

It is commonly believed that Protestantism questions the actuality of demoniacal possession, but this is not so. True enough, the Unitarians and Universalists have doubts about it, but so far as I am aware no other Protestant sect has ever formally repudiated it. There is a canon of the Church of England which forbids a priest to exorcise demons without the "license or direction (*mandatum*)" of his Bishop, but there is nothing to prevent a Bishop issuing such a *mandatum*. If Bishop Manning became convinced tomorrow that Sinclair Lewis or any other such antinomian was possessed, he could, I believe, give Dr. William N. Guthrie a *mandatum* to exorcise the invading gaseous organism. I do not allege that Dr. Manning would do it or that Dr. Guthrie would take advantage of the license; all I argue is that the transaction would lie within the confines of canon law. The Lutherans, who are very orthodox, all believe in demoniacal possession, and hence, by a neces-

sary inference, in witches; if they did not they would have to put Martin Luther down as a liar. As for the Methodists, the Baptists and other such proletarians of the Lord, it must be obvious that doubts among them are confined to a few advanced intellectuals, debauched by reading the epicurean poetry of Edgar A. Guest. The Baptists, at least in the South, even believe in ghosts, especially the colored brethren. The colored pastors have an elaborate ceremonial for exorcising all varieties of spirits, good or evil; an important part of it is the free-will offering just before the curative anathema is launched. In my own native republic, the Saorstát Maryland, I once made an attempt to ascertain the number of people, regardless of creed, who believed in ghosts and witches. After elaborate inquiries through prudent agents, I came to the conclusion that 92 % of the population believed in ghosts, and that 74 % also believed in witches. In the latter group was the then Governor of the State. He believed that rheumatism was caused by witchcraft, and wore a string around his middle to ward it off. The Marylanders are a gay and liberty-loving people, and drink and drab, perhaps, somewhat more than is good for them, but atheism has never made much progress among them. At least one of the eminent professors in the Johns Hopkins Medical School, at Baltimore, has been publicly accused of believing in witches, and has

never, so far as I know, made a categorical denial of it.

Dr. Summers is equally honest, and I think he deserves all praise for being so. Most ecclesiastics, when they write upon such subjects, try to evade the clear issue. They seem to be convinced—on what ground I don't know—that the old belief in demons is now dying out in the world, and to be afraid that they will be laughed at if they confess to it. All I can say is that that is a poor way to get into Heaven *post mortem*. Such duckers and skulkers, you may be sure, will have extremely unpleasant sessions with St. Peter when they reach the Gates, and Peter will be well justified in razzing them. Either the Christian religion involves a belief in disembodied powers, good and evil, or it doesn't. If it doesn't, then its Sacred Scriptures are a mass of nonsense, and even its Founder was grossly misinformed. If it does, then every one adhering to it ought to confess the fact frankly, and without ignominious equivocation. This is what Dr. Summers does. In detail, his colleagues in theology may sometimes reasonably challenge him, as when, for example, he lays down the doctrine that the heaving of tables at spiritualist séances is performed by demons from Hell. But his fundamental postulates stand beyond refutation. If he is wrong, then the whole science of Christian theology is a degraded imposture—something which no right-thinking, law-

abiding, home-loving American, I am sure, will want to allege. I rejoice to find a holy man so forthright and courageous, and so irresistibly convincing. He has rescued demonology from its long neglect, and restored it to its old high place among the sacred sciences. What a knock-out he would be on an American lecture tour! I offer him $1,000 in advance for his Jackson, Miss., house, with an offer of the fattest pastorate in the town thrown in.

4

To the Glory of an Artist

LIFE AND LETTERS OF HENRY WILLIAM THOMAS, MIXOLOGIST, by Various Hands. Washington: *Privately Printed.* [The American Mercury, February, 1927.]

This entertaining and instructive work is, in form, a *Festschrift* in honor of Mr. Thomas, for many years one of the most eminent of Washington bartenders. He pontificated, in the closing days of the Bill of Rights (*selig!*), in various celebrated Washington bars, including Loehl's, Shoomaker's, Arman's, and George Driver's, and those of the Shoreham, Willard, Raleigh and Metropolitan Hotels. His longest term of service was at Driver's, which was the first really high-toned saloon encountered in Pennsylvania avenue as one left the halls of Congress. Here his clients included all the most dis-

tinguished statesmen of the Republic, and many of its heroic warriors, gifted publicists and opulent men of affairs. His acquaintance among such men was wide and intimate: he lived in an atmosphere of greatness that was denser and more exhilarating, even, than that surrounding Col. George B. M. Harvey or Dr. Otto H. Kahn. His professional or bedside manner, like that of every other salient man of his craft, was delicate, discreet and judicious. If a Congressman, coming in from a committee meeting, raced his metabolism by drirking too fast and so began to blab high matters of state, Mr. Thomas would knock him off with a reliable silencer, and save him from ruin. If a Senator came in with a constituent who seemed suspiciously Christian, Mr. Thomas would express regret at not having seen him (the Senator) for a long, long time. If even higher dignitaries began to sway dizzily and clutch the bar-rail, Mr. Thomas would summon a pair of trustworthy Negroes and have them carted home. Such thoughtfulness and humanity, when combined with a high professional competence, naturally made him popular in the town, and when the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals supplanted Congress in the government of the District, and all the saloons were closed, and Mr. Thomas moved out to Chevy Chase, and began serving limeade and coca-cola at what was once the bar of the club there—when these

events fell like thunderclaps there was widespread woe in the highest circles, and congressional funerals began to multiply. Now his surviving friends, to honor him in his declining years, print the present *Festschrift*.

It is a mellow and charming volume, and the pity is that it is printed for private circulation only, and will thus not get into the public libraries, for the instruction of future generations. Prohibition, as every one knows, has not actually cut off the supply of strong drink, nor has it diminished the consumption. On the contrary, it has made drinking more common than ever before, especially among the young. But the young miss something that their fathers enjoyed: the privilege of contact with amiable and accomplished bartenders. They drink in washrooms, surrounded by bootblacks, busboys and subway tiles; their fathers drank in front of mahogany bars, with men of the world serving them. In the more high-toned of the old-time saloons American civilization, such as it is, probably reached its highest point. The society was of the best. The most obscure man, if he were decently clad, could meet United States Senators, the Governors of great States, men distinguished in all the arts and sciences, and the principal industrial and financial heads of the nation. It was a charming and admirable school for youngsters just coming to maturity, not only in manners

but also in all the ideas and fancies that engrossed the superior minority. They heard the great problems of statecraft discussed in an offhand and confidential way. They saw notable men in mufti, so to speak, with their cares laid off, and their minds functioning brilliantly. They came into contact with every class making up the world of affairs, from members of the Cabinet to champion pugilists, and from scientific men of the first caliber to the greatest artists and manufacturers of the nation. All this was especially true in Washington. The saloons of that town, during the half century before Prohibition, were the true centers of its intellectual activity. Its great men frequented them incessantly. They entertained all its eminent guests. Naturally enough, such customers would shrink from being served by roughnecks: they demanded bartenders of the highest skill and most delicate prudence. Such a bartender was Henry William Thomas. The statesmen and others who have collaborated in the *Festschrift* in his honor do honor to themselves.

The volume is small, as befits the modesty of the man whose virtues it celebrates, but it is packed with good things. It opens with a series of quotations from the greatest authors of all time—Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and so on—, every one of them a conscientious wet. Lesser men are also included—Longfellow, Sheridan, Villon, Irving, Pepys, Omar,

Horace, Ben Jonson and company—all of them equally wet. There follows a series of original toasts by some of the collaborators in the *Festschrift*, and after that comes a page of music and a sketch of the life and times of Mr. Thomas. Some curious details are in it, and not a few of them are pathetic. In the days of his service at Driver's, it appears, the common price of French and Italian vermouth, in case lots, was $6 a case. Absinthe cost $15 a case, and the best gins were obtainable at from $10 to $18. Scotch ran from $14 to $30, and rye from $6 to $16. Fourteen-year-old brandy cost $20, and sixty-year-old brandy $50. The booticians of to-day, though they gradually perfect their art, will never be able to offer sound goods at such prices. If, by the end of the fifth or sixth Coolidge administration, Scotch drops to $50 a case, as the public relations counsel of the New York booters lately predicted, it will still cost four times as much as the average Scotch of Mr. Thomas' prime. Moreover, it will be inferior in quality. Such bars as Driver's served only the choicest goods. They didn't buy labels, but Scotch. To-day it runs the other way. The last part of the *Festschrift* is given over to a long and voluptuous discussion of the drinks that Mr. Thomas used to compound. Many of the materials mentioned are almost unobtainable to-day. The booters bring in plenty of so-called Scotch whiskey and English gin, and im-

mense supplies of highly dubious champagne, but it would be hard, I believe, to find one able to furnish a plausible Sloe gin, or a sound Hollands, or a genuine St. Croix rum. Such delicatessen have simply gone out of the répertoire. They have gone out with the old-time bartenders—men of fine feelings and high gifts, their lives consecrated to an art that made men happy. Of these great craftsmen Mr. Thomas was one of the best. The frontispiece of the *Festschrift* shows him as he is to-day, still vigorous and handsome, but with the light of tragedy in his eyes. He looks as Shakespeare would have looked had he (Shakespeare) lived into the bleak, sour days of the Commonwealth. He looks as Washington would have looked if he had lived to see Coolidge.

5

God Help the South!

THE ADVANCING SOUTH, by Edwin Mims. Garden City, L. I.: *Doubleday, Page & Company* [The American Mercury, August, 1926.]

Dr. Mims, who hails from Arkansas, is professor of English at Vanderbilt University, in the great Christian *Polizeistaat* of Tennessee, and a member of the Joint Hymn-Book Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He has lectured at Chautauqua, N. Y., and is secretary of the Tennessee Law and

Order League. He thus makes the grade, by Southern standards, as a critic of literature and life. But in the less Christian North, I suspect, there will be scoffers to cavil at him, especially when it is noted that he is very suspicious of James Branch Cabell, and in fact puts Ellen Glasgow above him. And even in the South there will be heretics to repine that a more competent and sympathetic historian was not found to tell the story of their heroic (and perhaps vain) struggle to haul the Confederacy out of its wallow. For the good Dr. Mims, despite a laudable diligence and a high degree of uplifting enthusiasm, constantly gives one the impression of a scrivener laboring valiantly with a theme that he doesn't quite understand. Perhaps I may throw some light upon his equipment by observing that, when he comes to discuss Southern journalists, he has high and sweet praises for the late Mooney of Memphis, the most passionate defender of the Bryan theological imbecilities ever heard of even in Tennessee, and not a word for Hall of Montgomery, Wright of Columbia, S. C., Jaffe of Norfolk, Dabney of Richmond, or Sanders of Mooney's own town. In brief, Dr. Mims seems to know little more about the current journalistic situation in the South, and hence about the political and cultural situation, than a somewhat advanced village schoolma'm. He has heard of Johnson of Greensboro, now that Johnson has left the South, and of Harris of

Columbus, Ga., now that Harris has the Pulitzer prize, and of such women as Miss Frances Newman, Miss Nell Battle Lewis and Miss Sara Haardt, now that the North has discovered them, but one cannot escape the suspicion that they were outside his ken in the days of their first and hardest labors, as their heirs and assigns are outside his ken to-day. Call me a Union spy if you will, but I give you my solemn word that in his book of 319 pages, devoted largely, if not principally, to the renaissance of literary endeavor below the Potomac, there is absolutely no mention of Emily Clark, of Richmond, founder of the *Reviewer!* Or of Mrs. Julia Peterkin! Or of T. S. Stribling! Or of Clement Wood! Or of J. W. Krutch!

It is, perhaps, the worst of all the curses of the South that it is interpreted for the nation by just such depressing obfuscators. They love it as no Scotsman ever loved his smoky crags, and their yearning to see it go forward has all the violent passion of an evangelical religion, but they are seldom clear as to what is the matter with it, and they seldom differentiate accurately between its genuinely enlightened leaders—mainly young and extremely unpopular—and its mere windjammers. Dr. Mims, I should say in all fairness, is better than most, but he is still far too much the orthodox Southerner to see what is the matter with the South. A resident of Tennessee for a generation, he shows all the peculiar Tennessee prej-

udices and puerilities. For the pious Mooney, bawling for Genesis, he has high praises; for the intelligent and courageous John R. Neal he has only sneers. Where was he himself when Bryan marched in, and the hill-billies came down to drive all sense and decency out of the State? Was he in the forefront of the fray? Was he heard at Dayton, on the side of educated and self-respecting men? If so, his voice was small indeed, for I got no echo of it in the courtroom. Like all the other so-called intellectuals of the State, journalistic, legal and pedagogical, he left the heavy burden of the fight to Dr. Neal, and now all he can say of Neal is that he is "a local attorney" and "an often defeated politician." It is the tragedy of Tennessee that such men as Neal are defeated and such men as the mountebank Peay are kept in high office. It is the greater tragedy of the South that when, by some act of God, a Neal springs out of the land all the Mimses combine to cry him down.

That they succeed only too well is proved by Mims' own evidence. His book is strewn with the names of Southerners who have been forced to come North for air—Walter Hines Page, William E. Dodd, John Spencer Bassett, W. P. Trent, Woodrow Wilson, Ashby Jones. Of some of these men, especially on the political side, I am surely no romantic admirer, but they were the best that the South could produce, and the South obviously needed them. All came North—

and the younger men and women of to-day are following them. Perhaps the best newspaper editorial writer that the South has produced in my time is Gerald W. Johnson: he is now in Baltimore. The best newspaper reporter is Paul Y. Anderson: he is now in St. Louis. The most promising critic of letters and life is Joseph W. Krutch: he is now in New York. The list might be lengthened almost endlessly. In particular, the names of many women are on it, for the South, despite its gabble of chivalry, still knows how to be unpleasant to a woman who is intelligent. True enough, a few hard-boiled and heroic men, their veins filled with manganese, manage to hold out: for example, W. L. Poteat, John D. Wade, Paul Green, and Howard W. Odum. But Poteet is of such years that his mere antiquity now begins to protect him, and Wade, Green and Odum, though they remain in the South to-day, will probably be on their way tomorrow. The kind of "leader" who survives down there is mainly the yellow dog kind. The Underwoods pass out and the Peays and Bleases come in. The South loses Johnson and keeps Clark Howell, Douglas Freeman, and the incredible Sullen, of Mississippi; it lets the *Reviewer* die and reads and admires the *Manufacturers' Record.* The enlightened Pastor Jones departs for Kansas City and the preposterous Bishop Candler, with his coca-cola theology, holds the fort. Who *goes* South? I recall two salient emigrants:

William Jennings Bryan and the Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton.

What is to be noted in all this is that the South is by no means sterile. It still produces a very respectable annual crop of bright young men and women. Considering its backwardness in education, indeed, it probably produces more of them, relatively, than some of the States of the North—for example, New Jersey, Ohio and Vermont. The best blood of the South, I am inclined to think, is the best in the whole Republic—that is, taking account only of so-called Anglo-Saxons. But that best blood, save in a few areas, mainly along tide-water, is no longer dominant. The lower orders of Southerners, having been lifted out of poverty by the general economic rise of the region, have got the reins of political power into their hands, and through the medium of politics they are trying to force their ignorance upon their betters. Every emerging leader must pass their tests—and their tests are scarcely to be distinguished from those of the savages in the Borneo jungle. Culturally, indeed, they are precisely on the level of the anthropoid blacks surrounding them. They share the same suspicion of knowledge, they show the same primitive emotionality, and they practice the same barbaric and revolting religion. This religion, as is always the case with people only superficially civilized, colors their whole lives. The *shaman* is the principal func-

tionary among them, and his fiats have the force of divine revelation. Nothing can be undertaken that does not meet his approval; nothing is regarded as sound, or even as decent, that violates the tenets of his hog-wallow theology. The troubles of the South, it seems to me, all revolve around that simple fact. The *shaman*, who has been reduced to innocuousness in more civilized regions, is still too powerful down there. All the Southern politicians flatter and cajole him, and he is treated with elaborate respect by practically all the Southern newspapers. No wonder he believes in his own magic! And no wonder it is difficult, in the face of his ignorance and his power, to launch a sound idea!

It seems to me that the more intelligent Southerners, rising one by one out of the general darkness, are all doomed to failure until they concentrate upon this chartered enemy of every intellectual dignity and decency, and clear him off the scene. Their error, at the moment, consists in trying to compromise with him. They are all too eager to avoid violating the pious pruderies of his victims. It is an error that is not new in the world, and wherever it has been followed it has greatly prospered *shamans*. In its final form it converts itself into the doctrine that any and every theological notion, however insane and outrageous, deserves respect. I can imagine nothing more unsound. If the men of past ages had cherished that

delusion we'd still be sweating under the Inquisition —nay, we'd be consulting oracles and trembling before sorcerers. In other words, the whole human race would still be on the level of the Haitian voodoo-worshipers and the Georgia Baptists. The way to get rid of such ideas is not to walk softly before them, but to attack them vigorously and with clubs. If Mims and his fellow pussyfooters had done that in Tennessee, there would have been no Scopes trial, and no ensuing disgrace of the State. I don't think the yokels themselves were to blame for that obscenity. Such of them as I met during the trial seemed to me to be decidedly above the general level of American peasants. They were not noticeably stupid; they were simply grossly misinformed. The rubbish that was preached to them four times a week by their pastors went unchallenged. The Mimses hesitated to attack it, I daresay, for fear of being accused of attacking religion. Well, why should religion *not* be attacked when it is idiotic? What gives a theological imbecility superiority over any other imbecility? Why should a moron dressed up as a Methodist preacher get any more respect than a moron behind a plow? The doctrine that there are differences here greatly burdens the South. If it is ever to have a general intellectual awakening, and not merely a series of gallant but unimportant one-man revolts, it must first get rid of its superstitious reverence or sacerdotal

mountebanks. They are the common enemies of every enlightened Southerner, including such liberal but faithful churchmen as Dr. Jones and Dr. Poteat quite as much as such skeptics as Miss Newman and Cabell. No tolerant and progressive civilization will ever rise in the South with their consent.

Thus the fundamental struggle there is a *Kulturkampf* in the strictest Bismarckian sense, and soon or late its challenge must be squarely met. The question is whether the South is to be run by its educated and intelligent men, or by a rabble of hedge theologians, led by blood-sweating fanatics and followed by a docile tail of crooked politicians and boot-licking editors. As I have said, it produces plenty of admirable candidates for leadership—perhaps more, relatively, than any other American section save the Northeastern seaboard. But they are driven out almost as fast as they arise. The village pastors flush them instantly, and they are soon in full flight, with a baying pack of Ku Kluxers, Methodist bishops, Fundamentalist legislators, Daughters of the Confederacy, and professional wowsers after them. Suppose that, by some miracle, a competent biologist were produced at Vanderbilt University, at Nashville, which Dr. Mims serves as a professor. Where could he pass on his learning in Tennessee, save at Vanderbilt University? Suppose a competent journalist arose in Mississippi. What paper in that State would employ him? Cer-

tainly the same questions could not be asked in Illinois, say, or in Wisconsin, or in Maryland, or even in Pennsylvania, as dull and degraded as it is. Such States utilize their own good men. They welcome the free play of ideas. They have got beyond that elemental stage of civilization in which all questions are questions of faith. They have thrown off the tyranny of the *shaman*. The South, I believe, will some day follow them. But the road is long and full of perils, and many a head will be cracked before the end of it is reached.

6

The Immortal Democrat

JEFFERSON, by Albert Jay Nock. New York: *Harcourt, Brace & Company*. [The American Mercury, September, 1926.]

This book has a fine surface: it is the work of a subtle and highly dexterous craftsman. What publicist among us, indeed, writes better than Nock? His editorials during the three brief years of the *Freeman* set a mark that no other man of his trade has ever quite managed to reach. They were well-informed and sometimes even learned, but there was never the slightest trace of pedantry in them. In even the least of them there were sound writing and solid structure. Nock has an excellent ear. Thinking in English,

he thinks in charming rhythms. There is never any cacophony in his sentences, as there is never any muddling in his ideas. One may reject his doctrines as evil and against God, but one never finds any flaws in his actual syllogisms. In the present volume he is completely at home. Jefferson has been his Baal since his nonage, and he is soaked in Jeffersoniana as the late Dr. Harding was soaked in the idealism of the Elks.

What emerges here is in no sense a formal biography, nor even a political history. It is, rather, an elaborate psychological study of the man—an attempt to search out the origins of his chief ideas, to discern and delimit the forms that they finally took in his mind, and to estimate them in the light of the problems to which they were applied, and of the experience that has accumulated in the century since Jefferson's death. In brief, the book is a sort of critical analysis of Jeffersonism, done with constant sympathy and yet with a sharp outlook for fallacy and folly. It is accurate, it is shrewd, it is well ordered, and above all it is charming. I know of no other book on Jefferson that penetrates so persuasively to the essential substance of the man. There are no weak spots in it, and no false notes. It is overwhelmingly convincing as polemic and it is unfailingly caressing as work of art.

It goes without saying that much of Nock's atten-

tion is directed toward clearing off the vast mountain of doctrinaire rubbish that has risen above Jefferson's bones. In that Hell where politicians go the Sage of Monticello, I daresay, has suffered far more than most. Imagine his ghost contemplating Bryan, Alton B. Parker, Jimmie Cox, Al Smith, Jimmie Walker, W. G. McAdoo, Cole Blease, Ma and Pa Ferguson, John W. Davis, Tom Taggart, even Woodrow Wilson and Grover Cleveland! It is, indeed, one of the fine ironies of history that the party which professes to follow him has been led almost exclusively, for a hundred years, by leaders wholly unable to grasp the elements of his political philosophy. It stands as far from him to-day as the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals stands from Christ. That is to say, it stands as far off as it is humanly possible to get. Its titular leader, in 1924, was the preposterous Davis: he led it to disaster, but nevertheless he led it. Well, this Davis was, and is, the perfect embodiment of everything that Jefferson distrusted and disliked. He is precisely the sort of man whose oblique doings, in the years between 1810 and 1825, tortured old Tom with his dreams of monocrats. The rest are even worse: McAdoo and his Ku Kluxers, Al Smith and his Tammany gorillas, the Southern State bosses and their tatterdemalion hordes of boozy Prohibitionists. In the whole outfit there is but one man, I suspect, who would get any politeness

from Jefferson, imagining him come back to earth. That man, by a coincidence that is surely not strange, was long in formal exile from the Democratic party. He was excommunicated by the late Woodrow; in the Cox convention he was denied a seat; in the Davis convention he took no part. But he remains nearer to Jefferson than all the rest.

Of the Jeffersonian system Mr. Nock offers a clear and comprehensive account, disentangling it from the trivialities that party history has thrown about it. The essence of it, he says, is to be found in what would be called, to-day, Jefferson's class consciousness. He divided all mankind into two classes, the producers and the exploiters, and he was for the former first, last and all the time. But there is no consolation in the fact for the Marxians who now rage in the world, for to Jefferson producers meant far more than mere handworkers. A manufacturer, if he made some useful thing, was also a producer; so was a large landowner, if only he worked his land; Jefferson regarded himself as a producer, and his friend Jimmie Madison as another. Living in our own time, no doubt, he would put Henry Ford in that category; Henry, in fact, puts himself there, and with no little show of reason. The only genuine non-producer, in the Jefferson lexicon, was the speculator—that is to say, the banker, the promoter, the usurer, the jobber. It was against this class that he launched all his most

awful thunderbolts of invective; it was this class that he sought to upset and destroy in the ferocious and memorable campaign of 1800. His failure was colossal. Driving that class out of the executive offices and making life very warm for it in the halls of legislation, he only shoved it into the courts, and there it has survived gloriously ever since, gradually extending and consolidating its power. Since Marshall's day the American courts have suffered many vicissitudes and entertained many heresies, but in one department, at least they have kept the faith heroically: they have always protected the virtuous and patriotic bondholder.

Jefferson has come down in legend as the most adroit of all the early American politicians—that is, after Sam Adams. He is credited with having conjured up, almost out of the air, the party which still disgraces him. He is accused of almost fabulous feats of demagogy. I see little evidence for all this in his actual history. He was, in fact, far less the practical politician than the political philosopher. Office seems to have had few attractions for him, and he was quite devoid of the sense of party regularity. His so-called demagogy turns out, on inspection, to have been simply a realistic statement of fundamental democratic theory. There is little in even his most startling pronouncements that is not implicit in the Bill of Rights. He was far less the foe of the Federalists than

of government in general. He believed that it tended inevitably to become corrupt—that it was the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious and decent men. The less there was of it, the better he liked it, and the more he trusted it. Well, that was a century ago, and wild doctrines from the barricades were still in the air. Government has now gone far beyond anything dreamed of in Jefferson's day. It has taken on a vast mass of new duties and responsibilities; it has spread out its powers until they penetrate to every act of the citizen, however secret; it has begun to throw around its operations the high dignity and impeccability of a state religion; its agents become a separate and superior caste, with authority to bind and loose, and their thumbs in every pot. But it still remains, as it was in the beginning, the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious and decent men.

7

Fides Ante Intellectum

A Scientific Man and the Bible, by Howard A. Kelly. Philadelphia: *The Sunday-School Times Company.* [The American Mercury, February, 1926.]

The author of this astounding and depressing book is professor emeritus of gynecological surgery at the Johns Hopkins, and one of the most celebrated sur-

geons in the United States. This is what his own university says of him in an official document:

> His contribution to the development of genito-urinary surgery for women has been unparalleled. Step by step he unraveled the diseases of the bladder, ureter and kidney. . . . His methods of examination revolutionized gynecological diagnosis.

And much more to the same effect. In brief, a medical man of the first caliber: when he speaks of himself as a scientist, as he does very often in his book, he has every right to use the word. His life has been devoted to exact observation, and that observation has been made so competently and interpreted so logically that the result has been a series of immensely valuable improvements in the healing art and craft. And yet—and yet— How am I to make you believe that such a man has actually written such a volume as this one? How am I to convince you that one of the four men who laid the foundations of the Johns Hopkins Medical School—the daily associate and peer of Osler, Welch and Halsted—is here on exhibition as a Fundamentalist of the most extreme wing, compared to whom Judge Raulston, of Dayton, Tenn., seems almost an atheist?

Yet it is so—and I go, for the appalling proof, behind the book and to the man himself. I have known Dr. Kelly for twenty years, and at different times

have seen a great deal of him. Hours on end I have discussed his theological ideas with him, and heard his reasons for cherishing them. They seem to me now, as they seemed when I first heard them, to be completely insane—yet Kelly himself is surely not insane. Nor is there the remotest suspicion of insincerity about him. It would be of vast benefit to him professionally to throw over his great cargo of supernatural rubbish, and trim his course as his colleagues trim theirs. If he did so, the Johns Hopkins would be illuminated with Roman candles, star shells and incandescent bock beer signs, and the very cadavers in the deadhouse would have their backs slapped. But he will not budge. He believes that God created the world in six calendar days, and rested on the seventh. He believes that God caused forty-two little children to be devoured by she-bears because they made fun of Elijah's bald head. He believes that Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and then came out alive. *Medicinæ doctor* though he be, he believes that the hallucinations of John on the island of Patmos were real. An LL.D. of Aberdeen, he believes (Exodus XXII, 18) that witches exist and should be put to death. An honorary member of learned societies in Paris, Vienna, Rome, Berlin, Leipzig, Bucharest and Moscow, he believes in both the Virgin Birth (Matthew I, 18–25), and in the descent of Jesus from

David through Joseph (Matthew I, 1–17). All this, and much more, he believes absolutely without reservation, as a Tennessee hind believes it. "I accept the *whole* Bible," he says, "as God's Word." And he adds something that even the hind balks at: he believes in the Second Coming—"at any moment"!

In his book Dr. Kelly offers powerful argument for his amazing credo, but I can only report that, in cold type as *viva voce,* it leaves me full of what the lawyers call reasonable doubt. His logic has a curious habit of going halfway to a plausible conclusion, and then blowing up completely. For example, he starts off, in one place, by showing how the early criticism of the Gospel of John has broken down—and then proceeds gaily to the assumption that proving an error in criticism is identical with proving the complete authenticity of the thing criticized. Again, he denounces the effort to raise up doubts of the Mosaic authorship and divine inspiration of the Pentateuch —and then clinches his case by showing that the Bible itself "claims in all its parts" that it is "the very literal Word of God." But the record of a personal experience exhibits the workings of his mind even more beautifully. Early in manhood he had to give up his medical studies on account of ill-health, and went West to recuperate. In Colorado, during a blizzard, he was beset by snow blindness, and had to take to his bed. Suddenly there came upon him "an over-

whelming sense of a great light in the room." How would any ordinary medical student interpret that great light? How would any ordinary ice-wagon driver, or chiropractor, or Methodist bishop, or even catfish interpret it? Obviously, he would refer it to the violent conjunctivitis from which he was suffering—in other words, to a purely physical cause. But not Kelly. After nearly fifty years of active medical practice he still believes that the glare was due to the presence of God! This divine visitation he speaks of very simply as "the chief event" of his life! It surely was—if it was real!

What I'd like to read is a scientific review, by a scientific psychologist—if any exists—of "A Scientific Man and the Bible." By what route do otherwise sane men come to believe such inconceivable nonsense? How is it possible for a human brain to be divided into two insulated halves, one functioning normally, naturally and even brilliantly, and the other capable only of the ghastly balderdash which issues from the minds of Baptist evangelists? Such balderdash takes various forms, but it is at its worst when it is religious. Why should this be so? What is there in religion that completely flabbergasts the wits of those who believe in it? I see no logical necessity for that flabbergasting. Religion, after all, is nothing but an hypothesis framed to account for what is evidentially unaccounted for. In other fields such hypoth-

eses are common, and yet they do no apparent damage to those who incline to them. But in the religious field they quickly rush the believer to the intellectual Bad Lands. He not only becomes anæsthetic to objective fact; he becomes a violent enemy of objective fact. It annoys and irritates him. He sweeps it away as something somehow evil.

This little book I commend to all persons interested in the mysteries of the so-called mind of man. It is a document full of fascination, especially to the infidel and damned. There is a frankness about it that is refreshing and commendable. The author does not apologize for his notions, nor does he try to bring them into grotesque and incredible harmony with scientific facts. He believes the Bible from cover to cover, fly-specks and all, and he says so (considering his station in life) with great courage.

8

Speech Day in the Greisenheim

ACADEMY PAPERS: ADDRESSES ON LANGUAGE, by Members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. New York: *Charles Scribners' Sons.* [The American Mercury, January, 1926.]

The contributors to this volume, with their academic dignities, and their ages at the time it was published, are as follows:

Paul Elmer More, A.B., A.M., LL.D., 3(Litt.D.)	61 years
Bliss Perry, A.B., 2(A.M.), 3(L.H.D.), Litt.D., 2(LL.D.)	64 "
Paul Shorey, A.B., Ph.D., 7(LL.D.), 2(Litt.D.)	69 "
Brander Matthews, A.B., A.M., LL.B., D.C.L., Litt.D., LL.D.	73 "
Henry van Dyke, A.M., 3(D.D.), 3(LL.D.), D.C.L.	73 "
Robert Underwood Johnson, B.S., A.M., Ph.D., L.H.D.	73 "
William M. Sloane, A.B., A.M., Ph.D., L.H.D., 2(LL.D.)	75 "
William Crary Brownell, A.B., L.H.D., Litt.D., LL.D.	75 "

This works out to an average of a little more than seventy—the age, according to Psalms xc, 10, of extreme unction. Is it surprising that the dullness of the different papers runs in almost direct ratio to the years of their authors? Surprising or not, it is a fact. Dr. More, though he has nothing to say, and seems to have noticed little about the language he writes save that the English also use it, nevertheless offers a paper that has a certain stealthy liveliness, and even a touch of sauciness. He opens it, indeed, with a quotation from "The Merchant of Venice" which, flung at them by a barbarian, would have caused the most potent, grave and reverend signiors of the Academy to wince. But youth must kick up its legs, and Dr. More of the time of his cavorting, was only sixty-one. Ten years will mellow him, and give him a softer patina.

Dr. Perry, who is three years older and has been in cold storage at Harvard for years, is also somewhat goatish. He even goes to the length of presenting three ideas, one of which is actually new. The first, apparently borrowed from the philologians of the Invisible Empire, is that the secular arm should be summoned to safeguard the mother-tongue in the Republic—that is, that the process of Americanization should be pushed by law. The second is that the Academy should establish a grand prize for diction—to be given annually, it would seem, to some English *cabotin*, for the only virtuosi of "distinguished diction" that Dr. Perry mentions are George Arliss and Edith Wynne Matthison. The third suggestion, and the only one that is original, is that the Academy should also set up rewards for those authors, apparently American in this case, whose books "are characterized by distinction of style." A good idea, but full of dynamite. How would the old boys dodge giving an occasional gold medal, or India-paper Bible, or basket of Moët et Chandon, or silk American flag, or whatever the prize was, to James Branch Cabell? And what would they do with Cabell's blistering reply, having received and read it?

Dr. Shorey comes next—and with an unfair advantage. He is not a bad author and no more, like the rest, but a professor of Greek, and devoted all his life to Plato *geb.* Aristocles. (The rest, I venture, know

so little Greek that they can scarcely shine their own shoes.) His paper is that of an innocent but amiable bystander. He denies that there is an American dialect of English, and then proves very charmingly that there is. He is full of amusing anecdotes and shrewd observations. He closes with an engaging, but, I regret to have to add, far from convincing plea for the study of Latin. The day he read his paper before the Academy must have been a pleasant one for the janitor, staff surgeon, newspaper reporters, wheel-chair motormen, trained nurses and embalmers in attendance. But I guess that more than one immortal blew his nose sadly as wheeze followed wheeze, and cackles rippled through the audience. Shorey was then only sixty-nine and had lived at Bonn, Leipzig, Munich and Athens.

Over seventy Academicians jell. Dr. Matthews' paper is heavy and hollow stuff—the sort of thing he used to write for *Munsey's Magazine* in the days when he and it were ornaments of the national letters, and the Kaiser had not yet sent in such men as Cabell, Lewis and Dreiser to annoy him. Dr. Brownell contributes two dull papers in his baroque and tedious style, with occasional descents to dubious English. (See, for example, the first two lines of page 42.) Pastor van Dyke, turning aside from his combat of Golden Texts with Dr. Frank Crane, offers an essay

in which he denounces Carl Sandburg and says of "The Spoon River Anthology" that "to call it poetry is to manhandle a sacred word." (Has the rev. gentleman ever come to the page containing "Ann Rutledge"?) Finally, Dr. Johnson, after joining in the butchery of Sandburg, delivers a whoop for the old-style poetry—by which, on his own showing, he means poetry full of moral purpose—and then ends with a tart reference, in execrable taste, to the poetry printed by the *Century Magazine* since his retirement as its editor.

Thus the ancients of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Eight of them join forces to write a book of 282 pages—and the result is sheer emptiness, signifying nothing. Their subject is the language all of them are supposed to write, not merely well but better than any other eight men in the country—and what seven of them have to say of it is simply what one would expect from a baker's half-dozen of school-ma'ms, chosen at random.

9

Professors of English

THE STANDARDS OF AMERICAN SPEECH, AND OTHER PAPERS, by Fred Newton Scott. Boston: *Allyn & Bacon.* HOW TO DESCRIBE AND NARRATE VISUALLY, by L. A. Sherman. New York: *The George H. Doran Company.* [The American Mercury, October, 1926.]

Scott is an A.B., an A.M. and a Ph.D.; he has professed at the University of Michigan since 1887 and is now professor of rhetoric and journalism there and university editor; he has been president of the Modern Language Association, of the National Council of Teachers of English, of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and of the American Association of Teachers of Journalism; he is a member of the Modern Language Research Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the British Association, and represented the literati of the Republic at the Conference of American and British Professors of English at London in 1920; he is the author of many works, including an English grammar, a treatise on literary criticism and another on æsthetics, and the editor of many more, including two volumes of gems from Holy Writ. Sherman is an A.B., a Ph.D. and an LL.D.; he has professed English at the University of Nebraska since 1882, and is now dean of the graduate college there; he is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Delta Phi and other learned lodges; he has composed a book called "What is Shakespeare?" and another called "Analytics of Literature"; his textbooks are in wide use.

Well, what have these powerfully learned and eminent men to say in their present volumes? Scott de-

votes a chapter to proving that "of the 10,565 lines of 'Paradise Lost,' 670, or 6.3%, contain each two or more accented alliterating vowels," another proving that in such word-groups as "rough and ready," 68% put the monosyllable first and the dissyllable second, and 42% put the dissyllable first and the monosyllable second, and a third (very long) to developing John Stuart Mill's well-known saying that "eloquence is heard; poetry is overheard," *i. e.*, that the primary aim of prose is persuasion, whereas that of poetry is simply self-expression. So much for Scott. Sherman fills 364 pages with windy platitudes on the writing of English, and lays chief stress on the revolutionary discovery that visual images are very effective. At the end of each chapter he sets a dozen or more tests for students. I offer a few specimens:

Detail the points of exposition as gathered from some recent sermon.

Draw a character by the use of imaginative appeals of degree.

From some outgrown or discarded theme, find what sentences are not of the first or second grade of value.

Describe, by form-types, the safety chain.

Devise a new system of ten points, five of matter, five of manner, and by it evaluate three debates prepared on the same side of some live question of the hour.

Find or recall an example of summarizing narration that

seems to you worthy of being told in the consecutive manner, and give reasons for your criticism.

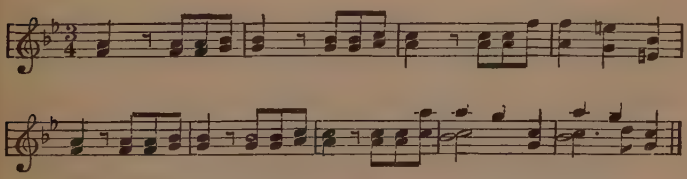
Such are two of the great whales of literary science among us. God help the poor yokels who have to sweat through their books! God help the national letters!

VI. FIVE LITTLE EXCURSIONS

1

Brahms

MY excuse for writing of the above gentleman is simply that, at the moment, I can think of nothing else. A week or so ago, on a Baltimore Summer evening of furious heat, I heard his sextette for strings, opus 18, and ever since then it has been sliding and pirouetting through my head. I have gone to bed with it and I have got up with it. Not, of course, with the whole sextette, nor even with any principal tune of it, but with the modest and fragile little episode at the end of the first section of the first movement—a lowly thing of nine measures, thrown off like a perfume, so to speak, from the second subject:



What is the magic in such sublime trivialities? Here is a tune so slight and unassuming that it runs to but eight measures and uses but six of the twelve tones in the octave, and yet it rides an elderly and unromantic man, weighing 180 pounds and with a liver far beyond pills or prayer, as if it were the very queen of the succubi. Is it because I have a delicately sensitive ear? Bosh! I am almost tone-deaf. Or a tender and impressionable heart? Bosh again! Or a beautiful soul? *Dreimal* bosh! No theologian not in his cups would insure me against Hell for cent per cent. No, the answer is to be found in the tune, not in the man. Trivial in seeming, there is yet in it the power of a thousand horses. Modest, it speaks with a clarion voice, and having spoken, it is remembered. Brahms made many another like it. There is one at the beginning of the trio for violin, 'cello and piano, opus 8—the loveliest tune, perhaps, in the whole range of music. There is another in the slow movement of the quintette for piano and strings, opus 34. There is yet another in the double concerto for violin and 'cello, opus 102—the first subject of the slow movement. There is one in the coda of the Third Symphony. There is an exquisite one in the Fourth Symphony. But if you know Brahms, you know all of them quite as well as I do. Hearing him is as dangerous as hearing Schubert. One does not go away filled and satisfied, to resume business as usual in the morn-

ing. One goes away charged with a something that remains in the blood a long while, like the toxins of love or the pneumococcus. If I had a heavy job of work to do on the morrow, with all hands on deck and the cerebrum thrown into high, I'd certainly not risk hearing any of the Schubert string quartettes, or the incomparable quintette with the extra 'cello, or the Tragic Symphony. And I'd hesitate a long time before risking Brahms.

It seems an astounding thing that there was once a war over him, and that certain competent musicians, otherwise sane, argued that he was dull. As well imagine a war over Beauvais Cathedral or the Hundred-and-third Psalm! The contention of these foolish fellows, if I recall it aright, was that Brahms was dull in his development sections—that he flogged his tunes to death. I can think of nothing more magnificently idiotic. Turn to the sextette that I have mentioned, written in the early '60's of the last century, when the composer was barely thirty. The development section of the first movement is not only fluent and workmanlike: it is a downright masterpiece. There is a magnificent battle of moods in it, from the fieriest to the tenderest, and it ends with a coda that is sheer perfection. True enough, Brahms had to learn—and it is in the handling of thematic material, not in its invention, that learning counts. When he wrote his first piano trio, at twenty-five or thereabout, he started

off, as I have said, with one of the most lovely tunes ever put on paper, but when he came to develop it his inexperience showed itself, and the result was such that years later he rewrote the whole work. But by the time he came to his piano concerto in D he was the complete master of his materials, and ever thereafter he showed a quality of workmanship that no other composer has ever surpassed, not even Beethoven. The first movement of the Eroica, I grant you, is *sui generis:* it will never be matched until the time two great geniuses collide again. But what is in the rest of the first eight symphonies, even including the Fifth and Ninth, that is clearly better than what is in the four of Brahms? The first performance of his First, indeed, was as memorable an event in the history of music as the first performance of the Eroica. Both were furiously denounced, and yet both were instantaneous successes. I'd rather have been present at Karlruhe on November 6, 1876, I think, than at the initiation of General Pershing into the Elks, or even than at the baptism of Coolidge. And I'd rather have been present at Vienna on April 7, 1805, than at the landing of Columbus.

In music, as in all the other arts, the dignity of the work is simply a reflection of the dignity of the man. The notion that shallow and trivial men can write masterpieces is one of the follies that flow out of the common human taste for scandalous anecdote.

Wagner wore a velvet cap and stole another man's wife; *ergo,* nothing is needed to write great music save the talents of a movie actor. What could be more preposterous? More than any other art, perhaps, music demands brains. It is full of technical complexities. It calls for a capacity to do a dozen things at once. But most of all it is revelatory of what is called character. When a trashy man writes it, it is trashy music.

Here is where the immense superiority of such a man as Brahms becomes manifest. There is less trashiness in his music than there is in the music of any other man ever heard of, with the sole exception, perhaps, of Johann Sebastian Bach. It was simply impossible for him, at least after he had learned his trade, to be obvious or banal. He could not write even the baldest tune without getting into it something of his own high dignity and profound seriousness; he could not play with that tune, however light his mood, without putting an austere and noble stateliness into it. Hearing Brahms, one never gets any sense of being entertained by a clever mountebank. One is facing a superior man, and the fact is evident from the first note. I give you his "Deutsches Requiem" as an example. There is no hint of what is commonly regarded as religious feeling in it. Brahms, so far as I know, was not a religious man. Nor is there the slightest sign of the cheap fustian of conventional patriotism. Never-

theless, a superb emotion is there—nay, an overwhelming emotion. The thing is irresistibly moving. It is moving because a man of the highest intellectual dignity, a man of exalted feelings, a man of brains, put into it his love for and pride in his country. Lucky the country which produces such men!

But in music emotion is only half the story. Mendelssohn had it, and yet he belongs to the second table. Nor is it a matter of mere beauty—that is, of mere sensuous loveliness. If it were, then Dvořák would be greater than Beethoven, whose tunes are seldom inspired, and who not infrequently does without them altogether. What makes great music is the thing I have mentioned: brains. The greatest musician is a man whose thoughts and feelings are above the common level, and whose language matches them. What he has to say comes out of a wisdom that is not ordinary. Platitude is impossible to him. He is the precise antithesis of Mr. Babbitt. Above all, he is a master of his craft, as opposed to his art. He gets his effects in new, difficult and ingenious ways—and they convince one instantly that they are inevitable. One can easily imagine improvements in the human eye, and in the Alps, and in the art of love, and even in the Constitution, but one cannot imagine improvements in the first movement of the Eroica. The thing is completely perfect, even at the places where the composer halts to draw breath. Any change in it would damage

it. But what is inevitable is never obvious. John Doe would not and could not write thus. The immovable truths that are there—and there are truths in the arts as well as in theology—became truths when Beethoven formulated them. They did not exist before. They cannot perish hereafter.

So with Brahms. There are plenty of composers of more romantic appeal. I need mention only Schubert. Schubert, had he lived, might have been the greatest of them all, but he died before any patina had formed on him; he was still going to school in his last days. But Brahms seems to have come into the world full-blown. A few experiments, brilliant even when they failed, and he was a master beside Beethoven and Bach. In all his music done after his beard had sprouted, there is not the slightest sign of bewilderment and confusion, of trial and error, of uncertainty and irresolution. He knew precisely what he wanted to say, and he said it colossally.

2

Johann Strauss

The centenary of John Strauss the Younger passed almost unnoticed in the United States. In Berlin and in Vienna it was celebrated with imposing ceremonies, and all the German radio stations put "Wein, Weib

und Gesang" and "Rosen aus dem Süden" on the air. Why wasn't it done in this great country? Was the pestilence of jazz to blame—or was it due to the scarcity of sound beer? I incline to Answer No. 2. Any music is difficult on well-water, but the waltz is a sheer impossibility. "Man Lebt Nur Einmal" would be as dreadful in a dry town as a Sousa march at a hanging.

For the essence of a Viennese waltz, and especially of a Strauss waltz, is merriment, good humor, happiness, *Gemütlichkeit*. It reflects brilliantly the spirits of a people who are eternally gay, war or no war. Sad music, to be sure, has been written in Vienna—but chiefly by foreigners: Haydn, who was a Croat; Beethoven, whose pap had been a sour Rhine wine; Brahms, who came from the bleak Baltic coast. I come upon Schubert—but all rules go to pot when he appears. As for Strauss, he was a 100% Viennese, and could no more be sad than he could be indignant. The waltz wandered into the minor keys in Paris, in the hands of the sardonic Alsatian Jew, Waldteufel. At home old Johann kept it in golden major, and so did young Johann after him. The two, taking it from Schubert and the folk, lifted it to imperial splendor. No other dance-form, not even the minuet, has ever brought forth more lovely music. And none other has preserved so perfectly the divine beeriness of the peasant dance. The best of the Strauss waltzes were written

for the most stilted and ceremonious court in Europe, but in every one of them, great and little, there remains the boggy, expansive flavor of the village green. Even the stately "Kaiser" waltz, with its preliminary heel-clicks and saber-rattling, is soon swinging jocosely to the measures of the rustic *Springtanz*.

It is a curious, melancholy and gruesome fact that Johann Strauss II was brought up to the variety of thieving known as the banking business. His father planned that he should be what in our time is called a bond salesman. What asses fathers are! This one was himself a great master of the waltz, and yet he believed that he could save all three of his sons from its lascivious allurements! Young Johann was dedicated to investment banking, Josef to architecture, and Eduard, the baby, to the law. The old man died on September 25, 1849. On September 26 all three were writing waltzes. Johann, it quickly appeared, was the best of the trio. In fact, he was the best musician who ever wrote waltzes for dancing, and one of the really first-rate musicians of his time. He took the waltz as his father left it, and gradually built it up into a form almost symphonic. He developed the introduction, which had been little more than an opening fanfare, into a complex and beautiful thing, almost an overture, and he elaborated the coda until it began to demand every resource of the composer's art, including even counterpoint. And into the waltz itself he

threw such lush melodic riches, so vastly a rhythmic inventiveness and so adept a mastery of instrumentation that the effect was overwhelming. The Strauss waltzes, it seems to me, have never been sufficiently studied. That other Strauss, Richard, knows what is in them, you may be sure, for the first act of "Der Rosenkavalier" proves it, but the musical pedants and pedagogues have kept aloof. What they miss! Consider, for example, the astonishing skill with which Johann manages his procession of keys—the inevitable air which he always gets into his choice! And the immense ingenuity with which he puts variety into his bass—so monotonous in Waldteufel, and even in Lanner and Gung'l! And the endless resourcefulness which marks his orchestration—never formal and obvious for an instant, but always with some new quirk in it, some fresh and charming beauty! And his codas—how simple they are, and yet how ravishing!

Johann certainly did not blush unseen. He was an important figure at the Austrian court, and when he passed necks were craned as if at an ambassador. He traveled widely and was received with honor everywhere. His waltzes swept the world. His operettas, following them, offered formidable rivalry to the pieces of Gilbert and Sullivan. He was plastered with orders like a Doug Fairbanks or an Otto Kahn. He took in, in his time, a great deal of money, and left all his wives well provided for. More, he had the

respect and a little of the envy of all his musical contemporaries. Wagner delighted in his waltzes and so did Brahms. Brahms once gave the score of one of them to a fair admirer with the inscription, "Leider *nicht* von Johannes Brahms"—Unfortunately, *not* by Johannes Brahms. Coming from so reserved a man, it was a tremendous compliment indeed,—perhaps the most tremendous recorded in history—nor was there any mere politeness in it, for Brahms had written plenty of waltzes himself, and knew that it was not as easy as it looked. The lesser fish followed the whales. There was never any clash of debate over Strauss. It was unanimously agreed that he was first-rate. His field was not wide, but within that field he was the unchallenged master. He became, in the end, the dean of a sort of college of waltz writers, centering at Vienna. The waltz, as he had brought it up to perfection, became the standard ball-room dance of the civilized world, and though it had to meet rivals constantly, it held its own for two generations, and even now, despite the murrain of jazz, it threatens to come back once more. Disciples of great skill began to appear in the Straussian wake—Ziehrer, with the beautiful "Weaner Mad'l," Lincke with "Ach, Frühling, Wie Bist Du So Schön," and many another. But old Johann never lost his primacy. Down to the very day of his death in 1899 he was *primus inter omnes.* Vienna wept oceans of beery tears into his grave. A great Vien-

nese—perhaps the ultimate flower of old Vienna—was gone.

Now he is dead a hundred years. But surely not forgotten, despite shadows over the moon here and there. The man who makes lovely tunes has the laugh on Father Time. Oblivion never quite fetches him. He goes out of fashion now and then, but he always returns. There was a time when even Bach seemed to be forgotten. What a joke! Bach will last as long as human beings are born with ears; in the end, perhaps, he will be all that the world remembers of the Eighteenth Century. And Strauss, I suspect, will keep on bobbing up in the memory of the race so long as men have legs and can leap in 3–4 time,—at all events, so long as there is good malt liquor anywhere in the world. World-wide Prohibition, it is conceivable, may eventually kill him; in a dry universe he would be *contra bonus mores*. But jazz can do him no more permanent damage than a dog visiting his grave.

3

Poetry in America

The New Poetry Movement in America, so full of life and even of malicious animal magnetism a dozen years ago, is now obviously down with cholelithiasis, and no literary pathologist of genuine gifts would be

surprised to hear, at any moment, of its death. Most of its former ornaments, indeed, begin to flee its bedside. Miss Lowell, in her last years, devoted herself to prose, and Masters goes the same way. Vachel Lindsay and Robert Frost take to college professing. Carl Sandburg has joined the minstrels. All the principal Greenwich Village poets, harassed by the morals squad, fled long ago to Paris, where landlords are less prying, and even artists may lead their own lives.

This slackening of effort is visible in all the little poetry magazines. Most of them continue to come out, and in the backwaters of the Republic, where all varieties of human progress are behind schedule, there are even occasional appearances of new ones, but there is little in any of them that is worth reading, and almost no actual poetry. What they print, in the main, is simply a series of exercises in the new prosody. It turns out, on examination, to be quite as tight and arbitrary as the old kind. For one thing that a poet of 1885 could not do there are ten things that a poet of 1927 cannot do. Thus the revolt against form expires in a new and worse formalism. The fact is most visible, of course, on the edges of the movement—that is, among the poets of Greenwich Village. What one observes in the advanced and atrabilious magazines which they publish is simply a sort of organized imbecility. The poet is strictly forbidden to make use

of any of the traditional materials of his craft, or to concede anything to its traditional idioms. He must eschew all rhyme that really rhymes, he must eschew all the orthodox rhythms, and he must eschew all direct attack upon the emotions. In other words, he must eschew poetry. What he writes, it must be confessed, is sometimes very interesting, in its bizarre, unearthly way—just as a college yell, say, is interesting, or an act of Congress. But it is no more poetry than the college yell is music or the act of Congress wisdom.

The trouble with most of the new poets, whether in or out of Greenwich Village, is that they are too cerebral—that they attack the problems of a fine art with the methods of science. That error runs through all their public discussions of the business. Those discussions are full of theories, by the new psychology out of the cant of the studios, that do not work and are not true. The old-time poet did not bother with theories. When the urge to write was upon him, he simply got himself into a lather, tied a towel around his head, and then tried to reduce his feelings to paper. If he had any skill the result was poetry; if he lacked skill it was nonsense. But even his worst failure still had something natural and excusable about it—it was the failure of a man admittedly somewhat feverish, with purple paint on his nose and vine-leaves in his hair. The failure of the new poet is the far more grotesque

failure of a scientist who turns out to be a quack—of a mathematician who divides 20 by 4 and gets 6, of a chiropractor who looks in the vertebræ for the cause of cross-eyes, of a cook who tries to make an omelette of china doorknobs. Poetry can never be concocted by any purely intellectual process. It has nothing to do with the intellect; it is, in fact, a violent and irreconcilable enemy to the intellect. Its purpose is not to establish facts, but to evade and deny them. What it essays to do is to make life more bearable in an intolerable world by concealing and obliterating all the harsher realities. Its message is that all will be well to-morrow, or, at the latest, next Tuesday, that the grave is not cold and damp but steam-heated and lined with roses, that serving in the trenches is far more amusing and comfortable than serving in the United States Senate, that a girl is not a viviparous mammal, full of pathogenic organisms and enlightened self-interest, but an angel with bobbed wings and a heart of gold. Take this denial of the bald and dreadful facts out of poetry—make it scientific and sensible—and it simply ceases to be what it pretends to be. It may remain good prose; it may even remain beautiful prose. But it cannot stir the blood as true poetry does; it cannot offer that soothing consolation, that escape from reality, that sovereign balm for every spiritual itch and twinge which is the great gift of poetry to man. The best poetry is always palpably untrue; it is

its eloquent untruth that makes it so lovely. The other day I read of a gentleman, condemned to death in one of the Southern States, who went to the electric chair reciting the Twenty-third Psalm. It is a pity he had to die; he would have made an excellent critic, for he understood perfectly the nature and purpose of poetry.

The new poets, now passing into the shadows, not only made the mistake of trying to rationalize poetry, an enterprise comparable to trying to rationalize necking, drunkenness or the use of hasheesh; they also tried to detach themselves from the ordinary flow of American ideas, and to convert themselves into an intellectual aristocracy. Some of them, true enough, quickly found the thing impossible, and so turned back, notably Sandburg and Lindsay, but nearly all at least made the attempt. Miss Lowell, perhaps, went furthest; there was a time when even Boston felt bucolic and loutish, and hence very uneasy, in her presence. The result was that nine-tenths of the compositions the fraternity produced simply shot into space. The great heart of the folk reacted to them as feebly as it might have reacted to polemics between astronomers. When poetry fails in this way it fails all over. I do not argue that it ought to reach and soothe the nether herd, though some of the very best poetry ever written actually does—for example, the poetry in the Bible. All I contend is that it ought to reach

the generality of the literate. If literary pastors are not moved by it, if it fails to supply phrases for editorial writers, if it is not quoted by stewed Congressmen at the endless memorial services on Capitol Hill, then it has obviously missed fire. Of all the stuff produced by the new poets precious little has ever gone that far. I can recall a few poems by Sandburg and Lindsay, perhaps one or two by Frost, and none other. The whole body of verse of Miss Lowell is as dead as if it had been written in Choctaw. Meanwhile, certain old-fashioned poets, notably Miss Reese and Miss Teasdale, have written things that will probably live. They will live because they are alive.

I sometimes think, indeed, that the real poetry of our era has been written, not by poets at all, but by men who would be as indignant, if you called them poets, as if you called them kidnapers, violoncellists or Socialists. I allude to the earnest rhetoricians who roam the chautauquas and the Kiwanis Clubs, waving the banner of idealism. What these fellows say is almost always nonsense, but it is at least the sort of nonsense that the American people yearn to cherish and believe in—it somehow fills their need. I point, for example, to their gabble about Service—already the source of phrases that Congressmen, clergymen, editorial writers and so on mouth every day. Here is the essential poetry of the Americano: his life is sordid, but he tries to escape from the fact by leering

at the stars. It is a comprehensible impulse, and even worthy. The poets of his country have not helped him to attain his heart's desire. He has had to turn to traveling go-getters and forward-lookers.

Alas, whenever one thus discusses the nature and function of poetry—that is, whenever one tries to be realistic about it—one is sure to be accused of being an enemy to the art itself. But does this necessarily follow? I am sure it does not. The social value of poetry is not diminished in the slightest by looking at it without illusion. It still offers its old escape from reality; it still offers consolation to *Homo sapiens* in his woeful journey through this inclement vale. To denounce it out of hand would be as absurd as to denounce religion or anesthetics. The purpose of anesthetics is to get rid of the harsh torture of pain and substitute the sweet peace of sleep. The purpose of even the highest poetry is almost precisely the same. Chloroform tells a man that he is not having his leg cut off, but lying drunk on a feather-bed, with fireworks to entertain him. Poetry tells him that his girl is as beautiful as Venus and is marrying him without a single thought of his tenements and hereditaments, that his country is a Galahad among the nations and wholly devoid of the rascality prevailing everywhere else, that he himself is a noble fellow and will go to Heaven when he dies. All these things, I suspect, are false. But all of them make life more bearable. Poets

are simply men who devote themselves to spreading them, often at great sacrifice of income. They are liars, but their lies, I believe, will be viewed very generously on the Resurrection Morn.

4

Victualry As A Fine Art

Some time ago, functioning as a magazine editor, I essayed to get hold of some articles on the American cuisine. At once I discovered that the number of American authors capable of writing upon the subject, charmingly and at first hand, was so small as to be substantially equal to the number of honest Prohibition agents. After six months search, in fact, I found but three, and one of them had been living abroad for years and the other had lived there since childhood. Even the third was scarcely a 100% American, for he had traveled extensively in heathen lands, and though he was holding a public office in Washington when I found him, he confessed in the first sentence of his article that he wished the Volstead Act were repealed and the Hon. Mr. Volstead himself in Hell.

I speak here, of course, of authors competent to write of victualing as a fine art. Of cooking-school ma'ms, of course, we have a plenty, and we also have a vast and cocksure rabble of dietitians, some of them more or less scientific. But it must be obvious

that the cooking-school ma'm knows very little about voluptuous eating, and that the dietition is its enemy. The ma'm, indeed, seldom shows any sign that the flavor of victuals interests her. The thing she is primarily interested in, to borrow a term from surgery, is the cosmetic effect. In the women's magazines she prints pretty pictures of her masterpieces, often in full color. They look precisely like the dreadful tit-bits one encounters in the more high-toned sort of tea-rooms, and at wedding breakfasts. One admires them as spectacles, but eating them is something else again. Moreover, the ma'm is primarily a cook, not an epicure. She is interested in materials and processes, not in gustatory effects. When she invents a new way to utilize the hard heel of a ham, she believes that she has achieved something, though even the house-cat may gag at it. Her efforts are to the art of the *cordon bleu* what those of a house-painter are to those of a Cézanne. She is a pedagogue, not an artist. The fact that she is heeded in the land, and her depressing concoctions solemnly devoured, is sufficient proof, if any were needed, that Americans do not respect the dignity of their palates.

Why this should be so I don't know, for here in this great Republic we have the materials for the most superb victualry the world has ever seen, and our people have the money to pay for it. Even the poorest Americano, indeed, eats relatively expensive food:

his wife knows nothing of the hard pinching that entertains her French sister. He has meat in abundance and in considerable variety, and a great wealth of fruits and vegetables. Yet he eats badly, gets very little enjoyment out of his meals, and is constantly taking pills. The hot dog is the *reductio ad absurdum* of American eating. The Sicilian in the ditch, though he can never be President, knows better: he puts a slice of onion between his slabs of bread, not a cartridge filled with the sweepings of the abattoir. This national taste for bad food seems all the more remarkable when one recalls that the United States, more than any other country of the modern world, has been enriched by immigrant cuisines. Every fresh wave of newcomers has brought in new dishes, and many of them have been of the highest merit. But very few of them have been adopted by the natives, and the few have been mainly inferior. From the Italians, for example, we have got only spaghetti; it is now so American that it is to be had in cans. But spaghetti is to the Italian cuisine simply what eggs are to the Spanish: a raw material. We eat it as only those Italians eat it who are on the verge of ceasing to eat at all. Of the multitudinous ways in which it may be cooked and garnished we have learned but one, and that one is undoubtedly the worst. So with the German sauerkraut—a superb victual when properly prepared for the table. But how often, in America, is it properly

prepared? Perhaps once in 100,000 times. Even the Germans, coming here, lose the art of handling it as its inner nature deserves. It becomes in their hands, as in the hands of American cooks, simply a sort of stewed hay, with overtones of the dishpan. To encounter a decent dish of it in an American eating-house would be as startling as to encounter a decent soup.

What ails our victualry, principally, is the depressing standardization that ails everything else American. There was a time when every American eating-house had its specialties, and many of them were excellent. One did not expect to find the same things everywhere. One went to one place for roast goose, and to another for broiled soft crabs, and to another for oysters, and to yet another for mutton chops. Rolls made the old Parker House in Boston famous, and terrapin *à la* Maryland did the same for Barnum's and Guy's Hotels in Baltimore. This specialization still prevails in Europe. The best restaurants in Paris—that is, the best in the epicurean, not in the fashionable sense—do not profess to offer the whole range of the French cuisine. Each has its specialty, and upon that specialty the art of the chef is lavished, aided by prayer and fasting. His rivals in other places do not try to meet and best him on his own ground. They let him have his masterpiece, and devote themselves to perfecting masterpieces of their own. Thus victualing in France con-

tinues to show a great variety, and a never-failing charm. One may eat superbly every day, and never encounter a dish that is merely eatable. The Parisians look forward to dinner as a Mississippian looks forward to his evening necking of the Scriptures. But in America the public cooks have all abandoned specialization, and every one of them seems bent upon cooking as nearly as possible like all the rest. The American hotel meal is as rigidly standardized as the parts of a Ford, and so is the American restaurant meal. The local dishes, in all eating-houses pretending to any tone, are banned as low. So one hunts in vain in Boston for a decent plate of beans, and in Baltimore for a decent mess of steamed hard crabs, and in St. Louis for a decent rasher of catfish. They are obtainable, perhaps, but only along the wharves. One must take a squad of police along to enjoy them in safety.

What remains? A series of dishes fit only for diners who are hurrying to catch trains—tasteless roasts, banal beefsteaks, cremated chops, fish drenched in unintelligible sauces, greasy potatoes, and a long répertoire of vegetables with no more taste than baled shavings. The bill-of-fare is the same everywhere, and nowhere is it interesting. Within the past year I have been in the heart of New England and in the heart of the South. In both places the hotels offered the same standardized cuisine. In neither was there any culinary sign that I was not in Chicago or New York. In

New England the brown bread was indistinguishable from the stuff served on railway dining-cars, and in the South there was no corn-bread at all.

I daresay that the railway diner has done much to bring in this standardization. Distances are so great in the Federal Union that the man who does much traveling eats most of his meals on trains. So he gets used to dishes that all taste alike, whatever their ostensible contents, and ends by being unable to distinguish one from another. Thus he is indifferent to novelty, and perhaps hostile to it. The hotels give him what he wants. If he protested often enough and loudly enough, they would turn out their present crews of street-railway curve-greasers and locomotive firemen and put in cooks.

I leave the meals served on railway diners for a separate treatise, to be undertaken later in life. They are botched by the effect to give them the delusive variety of the appalling meals served in American hotels. In a kitchen two feet wide and eleven feet long, four or five honest but uninspired Aframericans try to concoct fifteen or twenty different dishes. They naturally spoil all of them. On the Continent of Europe all meals served on trains are *table d'hôte*. Their principal dishes are cooked, not on the train, but at the terminals. They are always appetizing and often excellent. Light wines and beers wash them down. The dining-cars are hideous with gaudy advertisements—

one sees inside what one sees outside in America—but the chow does not insult the palate. At home I have to eat many meals in railway diners. I always order the same thing. It is impossible for even a cook traveling seventy miles an hour to spoil ham and eggs.

5

The Libido For the Ugly

On a Winter day, not long ago, coming out of Pittsburgh on one of the swift, luxurious expresses of the eminent Pennsylvania Railroad, I rolled eastward for an hour through the coal and steel towns of Westmoreland county. It was familiar ground; boy and man, I had been through it often before. But somehow I had never quite sensed its appalling desolation. Here was the very heart of industrial America, the center of its most lucrative and characteristic activity, the boast and pride of the richest and grandest nation ever seen on earth—and here was a scene so dreadfully hideous, so intolerably bleak and forlorn that it reduced the whole aspiration of man to a macabre and depressing joke. Here was wealth beyond computation, almost beyond imagination—and here were human habitations so abominable that they would have disgraced a race of alley cats.

I am not speaking of mere filth. One expects steel towns to be dirty. What I allude to is the unbroken

and agonizing ugliness, the sheer revolting monstrousness, of every house in sight. From East Liberty to Greensburg, a distance of twenty-five miles, there was not one in sight from the train that did not insult and lacerate the eye. Some were so bad, and they were among the most pretentious—churches, stores, warehouses, and the like—that they were downright startling: one blinked before them as one blinks before a man with his face shot away. It was as if all the more advanced Expressionist architects of Berlin had been got drunk on *Schnapps,* and put to matching aberrations. A few masterpieces linger in memory, horrible even there: a crazy little church just west of Jeannette, set like a dormer-window on the side of a bare, leprous hill; the headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at Irwin; a steel stadium like a huge rat-trap somewhere further down the line. But most of all I recall the general effect—of hideousness without a break. There was not a single decent house within eye-range from the Pittsburgh suburbs to the Greensburg yards. There was not one that was not misshapen, and there was not one that was not shabby.

The country itself is not uncomely, despite the grime of the endless mills. It is, in form, a narrow river valley, with deep gullies running up into the hills. It is thickly settled, but not noticeably overcrowded. There is still plenty of room for building, even in the larger towns, and there are very few solid

blocks. Nearly every house, big and little, has space on all four sides. Obviously, if there were architects of any professional sense or dignity in the region, they would have perfected a châlet to hug the hillsides —a châlet with a high-pitched roof, to throw off the heavy Winter snows, but still essentially a low and clinging building, wider than it was tall. But what have they done? They have taken as their model a brick set on end. This they have converted into a thing of dingy clapboards, with a narrow, low-pitched roof. And the whole they have set upon thin, preposterous brick piers. What could be more appalling? By the hundreds and thousands these abominable houses cover the bare hillsides, like gravestones in some gigantic and decaying cemetery. On their deep sides they are three, four and even five stories high; on their low sides they bury themselves swinishly in the mud. Not a fifth of them are perpendicular. They lean this way and that, hanging on to their bases precariously. And one and all they are streaked in grime, with dead and eczematous patches of paint peeping through the streaks.

Now and then there is a house of brick. But what brick! When it is new it is the color of a fried egg. When it has taken on the patina of the mills it is the color of an egg long past all hope or caring. Was it necessary to adopt that shocking color? No more than it was necessary to set all of the houses on end. Red

brick, even in a steel town, ages with some dignity. Let it become downright black, and it is still sightly, especially if its trimmings are of white stone, with soot in the depths and the high spots washed by the rain. But in Westmoreland they prefer that uremic yellow, and so they have the most loathsome towns and villages ever seen by mortal eye.

I award this championship only after laborious research and incessant prayer. I have seen, I believe, all of the most unlovely towns of the world; they are all to be found in the United States. I have seen the mill towns of decomposing New England and the desert towns of Utah, Arizona and Texas. I am familiar with the back streets of Newark, Brooklyn, Chicago and Pittsburgh, and have made bold scientific explorations to Camden, N. J. and Newport News, Va. Safe in a Pullman, I have whirled through the gloomy, God-forsaken villages of Iowa and Kansas, and the malarious tide-water hamlets of Georgia. I have been to Bridgeport, Conn., and to Los Angeles. But nowhere on this earth, at home or abroad, have I seen anything to compare to the villages that huddle along the line of the Pennsylvania from the Pittsburgh yards to Greensburg. They are incomparable in color, and they are incomparable in design. It is as if some titanic and aberrant genius, uncompromisingly inimical to man, had devoted all the ingenuity of Hell to the making of them. They show grotesqueries of

ugliness that, in retrospect, become almost diabolical. One cannot imagine mere human beings concocting such dreadful things, and one can scarcely imagine human beings bearing life in them.

Are they so frightful because the valley is full of foreigners—dull, insensate brutes, with no love of beauty in them? Then why didn't these foreigners set up similar abominations in the countries that they came from? You will, in fact, find nothing of the sort in Europe—save perhaps in a few putrefying parts of England. There is scarcely an ugly village on the whole Continent. The peasants, however poor, somehow manage to make themselves graceful and charming habitations, even in Italy and Spain. But in the American village and small town the pull is always toward ugliness, and in that Westmoreland valley it has been yielded to with an eagerness bordering upon passion. It is incredible that mere ignorance should have achieved such masterpieces of horror. There is a voluptuous quality in them—the same quality that one finds in a Methodist sermon or an editorial in the New York *Herald-Tribune*. They look deliberate.

On certain levels of the human race, indeed, there seems to be a positive libido for the ugly, as on other and less Christian levels there is a libido for the beautiful. It is impossible to put down the wallpaper that defaces the average American home of the lower middle class to mere inadvertence, or to the obscene

humor of the manufacturers. Such ghastly designs, it must be obvious, give a genuine delight to a certain type of mind. They meet, in some unfathomable way, its obscure and unintelligible demands. They caress it as "The Palms" caresses it, or the art of Landseer, or the ecclesiastical architecture of the United Brethren. The taste for them is as enigmatical and yet as common as the taste for vaudeville, dogmatic theology, sentimental movies, and the poetry of Edgar A. Guest. Or for the metaphysical speculations of Arthur Brisbane. Thus I suspect (though confessedly without knowing) that the vast majority of the honest folk of Westmoreland county, and especially the 100% Americans among them, actually admire the houses they live in, and are proud of them. For the same money they could get vastly better ones, but they prefer what they have got. Certainly there was no pressure upon the Veterans of Foreign Wars at Irwin to choose the dreadful edifice that bears their banner, for there are plenty of vacant buildings along the trackside, and some of them are appreciably better. They might, indeed, have built a better one of their own. But they chose that clapboarded horror with their eyes open, and having chosen it, they let it mellow into its present shocking depravity. They like it as it is: beside it, the Parthenon would no doubt offend them. In precisely the same way the authors of the rat-trap stadium that I have mentioned made a deliberate

choice. After painfully designing and erecting it, they made it perfect in their own sight by putting a completely impossible pent-house, painted a staring yellow, on top of it. The effect is truly appalling. It is that of a fat woman with a black eye. It is that of a Presbyterian grinning. But they like it.

Here is something that the psychologists have so far neglected: the love of ugliness for its own sake, the lust to make the world intolerable. Its habitat is the United States. Out of the melting pot emerges a race which hates beauty as it hates truth. The etiology of this madness deserves a great deal more study than it has got. There must be causes behind it; it arises and flourishes in obedience to biological laws, and not as a mere act of God. What, precisely, are the terms of those laws? And why do they run stronger in America than elsewhere? Let some honest *Privat Dozent* apply himself to the problem.

VII. HYMN TO THE TRUTH

ON December 28, 1917, in the midst of war's alarums, I printed in the New York *Evening Mail*, a journal now happily extinct, an article purporting to give the history of the bathtub. This article, I may say at once, was a tissue of somewhat heavy absurdities, all of them deliberate and most of them obvious. I alleged that the bathtub was unknown in the world until the '40's of the last century, and that it was then invented in Cincinnati by a contemporary of *Stammvater* Longworth. I described how the inventor, in the absence of running water in the town, employed Aframericans to haul it in buckets from the adjacent Ohio river. I told how a bathtub was put into the White House in the '50's, and how the intrepid Millard Fillmore, of Cayuga, N. Y., took the first presidential bath. I ended by saying that the medical faculty of the Republic opposed the new invention as dangerous to health, and that laws against it were passed by the legislators of Virginia, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

This article, plainly enough, was of spoofing all compact. I composed it, in fact, to sublimate and so

make bearable the intolerable libido of the war for democracy, and I confess that I regarded it, when it came out in the *Mail*, with a certain professional satisfaction. It was promptly reprinted by various other great organs of the enlightenment, sometimes with credit, and after a while a stream of letters began to reach me from persons who had read it. Then, of a sudden, all my satisfaction turned to consternation. For it quickly appeared that at least nine-tenths of these readers took my idle jocosities with complete seriousness! Some of them, of antiquarian tastes, asked for further light upon this or that phase of the subject. Others offered corrections in detail. Yet others offered me corroboration! But the worst was to come. Soon I began to discover my preposterous "facts" in the writings of other men, some of them immensely earnest. The chiropractors and other such quacks collared them for use as evidence of the stupidity of medical men. They were cited by medical men as proof of the progress of public hygiene. They got into learned journals and the transactions of learned societies. They were alluded to on the floor of Congress. The editorial writers of the land, borrowing them in toto and without mentioning my begetting of them, began to labor them in their dull, indignant way. They crossed the dreadful wastes of the North Atlantic, and were discussed horribly by English uplifters and German professors. Finally, they got into

the standard works of reference, and began to be taught to the young.

For a while I was alarmed; then I was amused; then I began to be alarmed again. In the early part of 1926, having undergone a spiritual rebirth and put off sin, I resolved to confess, and so put an end to the imposture. This I did formally on May 23. I admitted categorically that I had invented the whole tale, and that there was not a word of truth in it. I pointed out its obvious and multitudinous absurdities. I called upon the pedagogues of the land to cease teaching such appalling nonsense to the young, and upon the historians to take it out of their books. This confession and appeal were printed simultaneously in thirty great American newspapers, with a combined circulation, according to their sworn claims, of more than 250,000,000. One of them, and perhaps the greatest of them all, was the eminent Boston *Herald*, organ of the New England illuminati. The *Herald*, on that bright May Sunday, printed my article on a leading page of its so-called Editorial Section, under a black and beetling four-column head, and with a two-column cartoon labeled satirically "The American Public Will Swallow Anything." And then, three weeks later, on June 13, in the same Editorial Section, but promoted to page one, the same *Herald* reprinted my ten-year-old fake—soberly and as a piece of news!

Do not misunderstand me: I am not seeking to cast

a stone at the *Herald*, or at its talented and patriotic editors. It is, as every one knows, one of the glories of American journalism, and is awarded Pulitzer prizes almost as often as the Pulitzer papers themselves. It labors unceasingly for public morality, the Andy Mellon idealism, and the flag. If it were suppressed by the Watch and Ward Society to-morrow New England would revert instantly to savagery, wolves and catamounts would roam in Boylston Street, and the Harvard Law School would be engulfed by Bolshevism. Little does the public reck what great sums such journals expend to establish and disseminate the truth. It may cost $10,000 and a reporter's leg to get a full and accurate list of the guests at a Roxbury wake, with their injuries. My point is that, despite all this extravagant frenzy for the truth, there is something in the human mind that turns instinctively to fiction, and that even the most gifted journalists succumb to it. A German philosopher, Dr. Hans Vaihinger, has put the thing into a formal theory, and you will find it expounded at length in his book, "The Philosophy of As If." It is a sheer impossibility, says Dr. Vaihinger, for human beings to think exclusively in terms of the truth. For one thing, the stock of indubitable truths is too scanty. For another thing, there is the instinctive aversion to them that I have mentioned. All of our thinking, according to Vaihinger, is in terms of assumptions, many of them plainly not true. Into our

most solemn and serious reflections fictions enter—and three times out of four they quickly crowd out all the facts.

That this truth about the so-called truth is true needs no argument. Every man, thinking of his wife, has to assume that she is beautiful and amiable, else despair will seize him and he will be unable to think at all. Every 100% American, contemplating Dr. Coolidge, is psychically bound to admire him: the alternative is anarchy. Every Christian, viewing the clergy, is forced into a bold theorizing to save himself from Darwinism and Hell. And all of us, taking stock of ourselves, must resort to hypothesis to escape the river. What ails the bald truth is that it is mainly uncomfortable, and never caressing. What the actual history of the bathtub may be I don't know: digging it out would be an endless job, and the result, after all the labor, would probably be only a string of banalities. The fiction I concocted back in 1917 was at least better than that. It lacked sense, but it was certainly not without a certain charm. There were heroes in it, and villains. It revealed a conflict, with virtue winning. So it was embraced by mankind, precisely as the story of George Washington and the cherry-tree was embraced, and it will live, I daresay, until it is displaced by something worse—and hence better.

In other words, it was poetry, which is to say, a mellifluous and caressing statement of the certainly

not true. The two elements, of untruth and of beauty, are both important, and perhaps equally. It is not sufficient that the thing said in poetry be untrue: it must also be said with a certain grace—it must soothe the ear while it debauches the mind. And it is not sufficient that it be voluptuous: it must also offer a rock and a refuge from the harsh facts of everyday. Poets, of course, protest against this doctrine. They argue that they actually deal in the truth, and that their brand of truth is of a peculiarly profound and esoteric quality—in other words, that their compositions add to the sum of human wisdom. It is sufficient answer to them to say that the chiropractors make precisely the same claim, and with exactly the same plausibility. Both actually deal in fictions. Those fictions are not truths; they are not even truths in decay. They are simply better-than-truths. They make life more comfortable and happy. They turn and dull the sharp edge of reality.

It is commonly held that the vast majority of men are anæsthetic to the poetry, as they are alleged to be anæsthetic to other forms of beauty, but this is itself a fiction, devised by poets to dignify their trade, and make it seem high-toned and mysterious. The fact is that the love of poetry is one of the most primitive of human traits, and that it appears in children almost as soon as they learn to speak and steal. I do not refer here to the love of verbal jingles, but to the love of

poetry properly-so-called—that is, to the love of the agreeably not-so. A little girl who nurses a rag-doll is a poet, and so is a boy who plays at soldiers with a box of clothes-pins. Their ma is another poet when she brags about them to the neighbors, and their pa when he praises the cooking of their ma. The more simple-minded the individual, indeed, the greater his need of poetry, and hence the more steady his demand for it. No poet approved by the *intelligentsia* ever had so many customers as Edgar A. Guest. Are Guest's dithyrambs laughed at by the *intelligentsia?* Then it is not because the things they say are not so, but because the fiction in them is of a kind not satisfying to sniffish and snooty men. It is fiction suitable to persons of a less critical habit. It preaches the joys open to the humble. It glorifies their dire necessities. It cries down their lacks. It promises them happiness, and if not happiness, then at least contentment. No wonder it is popular! No wonder it is intoned every time Kiwanians get together, and the reassuring slapping of backs begins. It is itself a sort of back-slapping. And so is all other poetry. The strophes of Robert Browning elude the Kiwanian, but they are full of soothing for the young college professor, for they tell him that it is a marvelous and exhilarating thing to be as intellectual as he is. This, of course, is not true—which is the chief reason why it is pleasant. No normal human being wants to hear the truth. It

is the passion of a small and aberrant minority of men, most of them pathological. They are hated for telling it while they live, and when they die they are swiftly forgotten. What remains to the world, in the field of wisdom, is a series of long-tested and solidly agreeable lies. It is out of such lies that most of the so-called knowledge of humanity flows. What begins as poetry ends as fact, and is embalmed in the history books. One recalls the gaudy days of 1914–1918.

But I am forgetting the coda to my story. On July 25, six weeks after the *Herald's* astounding *faux pas* and nine weeks after my exposure of the original fraud, I printed another article on the subject, disclosing the complete facts once more, and cackling over the joke at the *Herald's* expense. This second article got a great deal of attention: it was reprinted from end to end of the Republic, and discussed in such remote and barbarous places as Liverpool, Melbourne and Cape Town. And then, early in 1927, the distinguished *Scribner's Magazine* printed a learned article on the history of bathing, and in it all my stale nonsense was once more set forth as fact!

VIII. THE PEDAGOGY OF SEX

IT is a curious and instructive fact that in all the vast literature of so-called sex hygiene emitted from the American presses for twenty years past there is scarcely a book of any sound and practical value. I have been through, I should say, at least a hundred such volumes, and I can recall but one that was even completely honest. That one was a little pamphlet called "The Sex Side of Life," by Mrs. Mary Ware Dennett, a birth controller but an intelligent woman. Naturally enough, it was suppressed by the wowsers of the Postoffice, and is now contraband. All the rest of the expository and hortatory manuals, large and small, are full of evasions, with many descents to downright false pretenses. It is difficult to imagine such prissy rubbish deceiving the adolescents to whom it is ostensibly addressed. For youth, though it may lack knowledge, is certainly not devoid of intelligence: it sees through shams with sharp and terrible eyes. When a schoolmaster is an ass, which happens in Christendom more often than not, you may be sure that even the dullest of his pupils is well aware of it.

The teachers of sex hygiene fall almost unani-

mously into that melancholy category. Very few such books appear to be written by adults of worldly experience and sound sense. They are, like the school physiology books, mainly the product of authors cursed with the *furor pedagogicus*—which is to say, of authors whose yearning to teach is unaccompanied by anything properly describable as useful knowledge or civilized discretion. I have read such books that were downright idiotic, and I have read others that were palpably dangerous. What ails most of them is simply the fact that their composers, as pedagogues, are moralists first, and scientists only afterward. Dealing with a subject in which only the plain and unequivocal facts can be of any imaginable value, they swathe those facts in such endless yards of pious platitude that not even a modern puella, appalling keen though her wits may be, can be expected to penetrate to the core of wisdom that is theoretically concealed within them.

Several common defects run through these lamentable tomes. One is the thumping *non sequitur* that is in them—the gross disparity between their premisses and their conclusions. They start off with attempts to show that the phenomena of sex in the lower organisms —usually dahlias, herring or frogs—are beautiful and instructive, and they close with horrible warnings that the phenomena of sex in man are ugly and not to be mentioned. I do not forget, of course, their fre-

quent high praise of maternity, their florid descriptions of the ineffable joys of philoprogenitiveness. But maternity, as they picture it, is scarcely more sexual than playing the piano. It is, in fact, set up as something definitely anti-sexual, and virtuous thereby,—as a sweet boon that must be forfeited if sex is yielded to. I do not know how this logical swamp is to be got around. It may present, indeed, a difficulty that no one will ever resolve. All I presume to do is to point out that the authors of the sex hygiene books have certainly not disposed of it, and that most of them seem to be happily unaware that it exists. First they describe romantically the mating of the calla-lilies and the June bugs, and then they plunge furiously into their revolting treatises upon *ophthalmia neonatorum*, lues, prostatitis, female weakness, and the fires of Hell. First they paint a picture fit for a Christmas card, and then they turn it around and show a panorama of jails, gutters and dissecting-rooms. It is the old juristic error of trying to put down crime by converting trivial misdemeanors into thumping felonies, with capital punishment. I don't believe that it works. Personally, I do not frequent adolescent society, but if those who do so are to be believed it is looser to-day than it ever was before. That is to say, the era of sex hygiene books—pouring from the presses by the million—is an era of rapidly increasing sexual recklessness. Is there any relation of cause and effect here? I

incline to think that there may be. Youth, with its highly efficient eyes, sees plainly that many, at least, of the dangers described are enormously exaggerated. What more natural than for it to conclude that the rest are exaggerated, too?

There is another defect common to most of these books, and it is quite as serious as the first. It lies in their evasion of the plain fact that sex would be unimportant if it were not for its capacity to produce an overwhelming ecstasy—that the average human being seldom thinks of it in any other aspect, and almost never hears of it. This ecstasy, of course, does not have to be taught; it is known by every flapper who has been kissed by her first beau. But when, in a treatise upon the subject, it is not mentioned at all—or, if mentioned, passed over gingerly—, then it is certainly not surprising if the young reader drops the book as ignorant and fraudulent, and is lost to the moral lessons it inculcates. Only Mrs. Dennett, of all the sexual pedagogues I have read, so much as hints that the exercise of the reproductive faculty is immensely agreeable—and Mrs. Dennett, as I have said, is under the ban of the Postoffice. The rest of the sex hygienists depict it either as something inert and banal, like having one's hair cut, or as something painful and dangerous, like having one's appendix out. There is, on the one hand, the chaste and arctic philandering of the rose, and there is on the other

hand a complex of pathological horrors. The average youngster, male or female, is deceived by neither picture. It is well known, even in the primary grades, that kissing is far more pleasant than gargling or sneezing, and it is unanimously suspected that what instinct suggests ought to follow is more pleasant still. Those ensuing proceedings constitute the fundamental mystery of sex, as the young confront it—and yet it is precisely there that the sex hygiene books are least illuminating. They are full of alarming news about the remotest and most improbable consequences of a phenomenon, and leave the phenomenon itself undescribed. Thus they fail to satisfy the very curiosity that ostensibly brought them into being—the very curiosity they so ineptly inflame. Is it any wonder that intelligent young readers—and even a moron, at twelve, is still intelligent—cast them aside as buncombe, and carry away nothing from them save the notion that what is so dangerous must be immensely fascinating, else the human race would have committed suicide long ago by avoiding the risk?

As I have hinted, it may be that these defects in the sex hygiene books—and I could list many more—are inescapable. It may be that the subject is inherently and incurably resistent to pedagogical science. But I prefer to take a more optimistic view. The human mind is a pliant and puissant organ. It has solved

many occult and vexatious problems. Perhaps, in the long run, it will solve this one too. Perhaps, indeed, the solution would be possible to-morrow—if the higher powers of the mind were applied to it. In the sex hygiene books, so far as I can make out, only the lower powers are in action. Such books, it appears, are not ordinarily written by persons of sound information and ordinary sense. On the contrary, they seem to be mainly the product of Freudian cripples who know very little about the subject they discuss, and have nothing to say about it that is apposite and worth hearing. They are moral exhorters, not seekers of the truth. Their aim is hortatory, not scientific. They apply themselves to what ought to be, not to what is.

I believe that the remedy lies in trying to enlist performers of a better grade—that is, performers who have taken the trouble to investigate the matters they deal with, calmly and thoroughly, and who have the degree of common sense that one ordinarily looks for in a railroad conductor or an ice-man. There must be plenty of such men, not to mention women. Their writings, indeed, are already available—pursued by the wowsers, but not yet quite scotched. I have mentioned Mrs. Dennett and offer Havelock Ellis as another example. But most such authors, of course, address adults—what is more, highly sophisticated adults. What remains is for them to bring their knowledge

down to the comprehension of the young. I believe that it can be done, and that on some near to-morrow it will be done. When the day comes at least nine-tenths of the sex hygiene books that now stand in the book-shops will be thrown out as rubbish.

IX. METROPOLIS

IT is astonishing how little New York figures in current American literature. Think of the best dozen American novels of the last ten years. No matter which way your taste and prejudice carry you, you will find, I believe, that Manhattan Island is completely missing from at least ten of them, and that in the other two it is little more than a passing scene, unimportant to the main action. Perhaps the explanation is to be sought in the fact that very few authors of any capacity live in the town. It attracts all the young aspirants powerfully, and hundreds of them, lingering on, develop into very proficient hacks and quacks, and so eventually adorn the Authors' League, the Poetry Society, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters. But not many remain who have anything worth hearing to say. They may keep quarters on the island, but they do their writing somewhere else.

Primarily, I suppose, it is too expensive for them: in order to live decently they must grind through so much hack work for the cheap magazines, the movies and the Broadway theaters that there is no time left for their serious concerns. But there is also something

else. The town is too full of distractions to be comfortable to artists; it is comfortable only to performers. Its machinery of dissipation is so vastly developed that no man can escape it—not even an author laboring in his lonely room, the blinds down and chewing-gum plugging his ears. He hears the swish of skirts through the key-hole; down the area-way comes the clink of ice in tall glasses; some one sends him a pair of tickets to a show which whisper promises will be the dirtiest seen since the time of the Twelve Apostles. It is a sheer impossibility in New York to escape such appeals to the ductless glands. They are in the very air. The town is no longer a place of work; it is a place of pleasure. Even the up-State Baptist, coming down to hear the Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton tear into sin, must feel the pull of temptation. He wanders along Broadway to shiver dutifully before the Metropolitan Opera House, with its black record of lascivious music dramas and adulterous tenors, but before he knows what has struck him he is lured into a movie house even gaudier and wickeder, to sweat before a film of carnal love with the lewd music of Tschaikowsky dinning in his ears, or into a grind-shop auction house to buy an ormolu clock disgraceful to a Christian, or into Childs' to debauch himself with such victuals as are seen in Herkimer county only on days of great ceremonial.

Such is the effect of organized badness, operating

upon imperfect man. But what is bad is also commonly amusing, and so I continue to marvel that the authors of the Republic, and especially the novelists, do not more often reduce it to words. Is there anything more charming and instructive in the scenes that actually engage them? I presume to doubt it. There are more frauds and scoundrels, more quacks and cony-catchers, more suckers and visionaries in New York than in all the country west of the Union Hill, N. J., breweries. In other words, there are more interesting people. They pour in from all four points of the compass, and on the hard rocks of Manhattan they do their incomparable stuff, day and night, year in and year out, ever hopeful and ever hot for more. Is it drama if Jens Jensen, out in Nebraska, pauses in his furrow to yearn heavily that he were a chiropractor? Then why isn't it drama if John Doe, prancing in a New York night club, pauses to wonder who the fellow was who just left in a taxi with Mrs. Doe? Is it tragedy that Nils Nilsen, in South Dakota, wastes his substance trying to horn into a mythical Heaven? Then why isn't it tragedy when J. Eustace Garfunkel, after years of effort, fails to make the steep grade of St. Bartholomew's Church?

New York is not all bricks and steel. There are hearts there, too, and if they do not break, then they at least know how to leap. It is the place where all the aspirations of the Western World meet to form

one vast master aspiration, as powerful as the suction of a steam dredge. It is the icing on the pie called Christian civilization. That it may have buildings higher than any ever heard of, and gin enough to keep it gay, and bawdy shows enough, and door-openers enough, and noise and confusion enough—that these imperial ends may be achieved, uncounted millions sweat and slave on all the forlorn farms of the earth, and in all the miserable slums, including its own. It pays more for a meal than an Italian or a Pole pays for a wife, and the meal is better than the wife. It gets the best of everything, and especially of what, by all reputable ethical systems, is the worst. It has passed beyond all fear of Hell or hope of Heaven. The primary postulates of all the rest of the world are its familiar jokes. A city apart, it is breeding a race apart. Is that race American? Then so is a bashi-bazouk American. Is it decent? Then so is a street-walker decent. But I don't think that it may be reasonably denounced as dull.

What I marvel at is that the gorgeous, voluptuous color of this greatest of world capitals makes so little showing in the lovely letters of the United States. I am not forgetting such things as John Dos Passos' "Manhattan Transfer" and Felix Riesenberg's "East Side, West Side"—but neither am I admitting that they fill my bill. If only as spectacle, the city is superb. It has a glitter like that of the Constantinople of the Comneni.

It roars with life like the Bagdad of the Sassanians. These great capitals of antiquity, in fact, were squalid villages compared to it, as Rome was after their kind, and Paris, Berlin and London are to-day. There is little in New York that does not issue out of money. It is not a town of ideas; it is not even a town of causes. But what issues out of money is often extremely brilliant, and I believe that it is more brilliant in New York than it has ever been anywhere else. A truly overwhelming opulence envelops the whole place, even the slums. The slaves who keep it going may dwell in vile cubicles, but they are hauled to and from their work by machinery that costs hundreds of millions, and when they fare forth to recreate themselves for to-morrow's tasks they are felled and made dumb by a gaudiness that would have floored John Paleologus himself. Has any one ever figured out, in hard cash, the value of the objects of art stored upon Manhattan Island? I narrow it to paintings, and bar out all the good ones. What would it cost to replace even the bad ones? Or all the statuary, bronzes, hangings, pottery, and bogus antiques? Or the tons of bangles, chains of pearls, stomachers, necklaces, and other baubles? Assemble all the diamonds into one colossal stone, and you will have a weapon to slay Behemoth. The crowds pour in daily, bringing the gold wrung from iron and coal, hog and cow. It is invisible, for they carry it in checks, but it is real for all that. Every dollar earned

in Kansas or Montana finds its way, soon or late, to New York, and if there is a part of it that goes back, there is also a part of it that sticks.

What I contend is that this spectacle, lush and barbaric in its every detail, offers the material for a great imaginative literature. There is not only gaudiness in it; there is also a hint of strangeness; it has overtones of the fabulous and even of the diabolical. The thing simply cannot last. If it does not end by catastrophe, then it will end by becoming stale, which is to say, dull. But while it is in full blast it certainly holds out every sort of stimulation that the gifted literatus may plausibly demand. The shocking imbecility of Main Street is there and the macabre touch of Spoon River. But though Main Street and Spoon River have both found their poets, Manhattan is still to be adequately sung. How will the historian of the future get at it, imagining a future and assuming that it will have historians? The story is not written anywhere in official records. It is not in the files of the newspapers, which reflect only the surface, and not even all of that. It will not go into memoirs, for the actors in the melodramatic comedy have no taste for prose, and moreover they are all afraid to tell what they know. What it needs, obviously, is an imaginative artist. We have them in this bursting, stall-fed land—not many of them, perhaps—not as many as our supply of quacks —but nevertheless we have them. The trouble is that

they either hate Manhattan too much to do its portrait, or are so bedazzled by it that their hands are palsied and their parts of speech demoralized. Thus we have dithyrambs of Manhattan—but no prose.

I hymn the town without loving it. It is immensely amusing, but I see nothing in it to inspire the fragile and shy thing called affection. I can imagine an Iowan loving the black, fecund stretches of his native State, or a New Englander loving the wreck of Boston, or even a Chicagoan loving Chicago, poets, Loop, stockyards and all, but it is hard for me to fancy any rational human being loving New York. Does one love bartenders? Or interior decorators? Or elevator starters? Or the head-waiters of night clubs? No, one delights in such functionaries, and perhaps one respects them and even reveres them, but one does not love them. They are as palpably cold and artificial as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Like it, they are mere functions of solvency. When the sheriff comes in they flutter away. One invests affection in places where it will be safe when the winds blow.

But I am speaking now of spectacles, not of love affairs. The spectacle of New York remains—infinitely grand and gorgeous, stimulating like the best that comes out of goblets, and none the worse for its sinister smack. The town seizes upon all the more facile and agreeable emotions like band music. It is immensely trashy—but it remains immense. Is it a mere

Utopia of rogues, a vast and complicated machine for rooking honest men? I don't think so. The honest man, going to its market, gets sound value for his money. It offers him luxury of a kind never dreamed of in the world before—the luxury of being served by perfect and unobtrusive slaves, human and mechanical. It permits him to wallow regally—nay, almost celestially. The Heaven of the Moslems is open to any one who can pay the *couvert* charge and honorarium of the hat-check girl—and there is a door, too, leading into the Heaven of the Christians, or, at all events, into every part of it save that devoted to praise and prayer. Nor is all this luxury purely physiological. There is entertainment also for the spirit, or for what passes for the spirit when men are happy. There were more orchestral concerts in New York last Winter than there were in Berlin. The town has more theaters, and far better ones, than a dozen Londons. It is, as I have said, loaded with art to the gunwales, and steadily piling more on deck. Is it unfecund of ideas? Perhaps. But surely it is not hostile to them. There is far more to the show it offers than watching a pretty gal oscillate her hips; one may also hear some other gal, only a shade less sightly, babble the latest discoveries in antinomianism. All kinds, in brief, come in. There are parts for all in the *Totentanz*, even for moralists to call the figures. But there is, as yet, no recorder to put it on paper.

X. DIVES INTO QUACKERY

1

Chiropractic

THIS preposterous quackery is now all the rage in the back reaches of the Republic, and even begins to conquer the less civilized of the big cities. As the old-time family doctor dies out in the country towns, with no trained successor willing to take over his dismal business, he is followed by some hearty blacksmith or ice-wagon driver, turned into a chiropractor in six months, often by correspondence. In Los Angeles the damned there are more chiropractors than actual physicians, and they are far more generally esteemed. Proceeding from the Ambassador Hotel to the heart of the town, along Wilshire boulevard, one passes scores of their gaudy signs; there are even many chiropractic "hospitals." The morons who pour in from the prairies and deserts, most of them ailing, patronize these "hospitals" copiously, and give to the chiropractic pathology the same high respect that they accord to the theology of Aimée McPherson and the art of Cecil De Mille. That pathology is

grounded upon the doctrine that all human ills are caused by the pressure of misplaced vertebræ upon the nerves which come out of the spinal cord—in other words, that every disease is the result of a pinch. This, plainly enough, is buncombe. The chiropractic therapeutics rest upon the doctrine that the way to get rid of such pinches is to climb upon a table and submit to an heroic pummeling by a retired piano mover. This, obviously, is buncombe doubly damned.

Both doctrines were launched upon the world by an old quack named Andrew T. Still, the father of osteopathy. For years his followers merchanted them, and made a lot of money at the trade. But as they grew opulent they grew ambitious, *i. e.*, they began to study anatomy and physiology. The result was a gradual abandonment of Papa Still's ideas. The high-toned osteopath of to-day is a sort of eclectic. He tries anything that promises to work, from tonsillectomy to the vibrations of the late Dr. Abrams. With four years' training behind him, he probably knows more anatomy than the average graduate of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, or, at all events, more osteology. Thus enlightened, he seldom has much to say about pinched nerves in the back. But as he abandoned the Still revelation it was seized by the chiropractors, led by another quack, one Palmer. This Palmer grabbed the pinched nerve nonsense and began teaching it to ambitious farm-hands and out-at-elbow Baptist preachers

in a few easy lessons. To-day the backwoods swarm with chiropractors, and in most States they have been able to exert enough pressure on the rural politicians to get themselves licensed. Any lout with strong hands and arms is perfectly equipped to become a chiropractor. No education beyond the elements is necessary. The whole art and mystery may be imparted in a few months, and the graduate is then free to practice upon God's images. The takings are often high, and so the profession has attracted thousands of recruits—retired baseball players, plumbers, truck-drivers, longshoremen, bogus dentists, dubious preachers, village school superintendents. Now and then a quack doctor of some other school—say homeopathy—plunges into it. Hundreds of promising students come from the intellectual ranks of hospital orderlies.

In certain States efforts have been made, sometimes by the medical fraternity, to make the practice of chiropractic unlawful. I am glad to be able to report that practically all of them have failed. Why should it be prohibited? I believe that every free-born man has a clear right, when he is ill, to seek any sort of treatment that he yearns for. If his mental processes are of such a character that the theory of chiropractic seems plausible to him, then he should be permitted to try chiropractic. And if it be granted that he has a right to do so, then it follows clearly that any stevedore privy to the technique of chiropractic has a right to treat him.

To preach any contrary doctrine is to advocate despotism and slavery. The arguments for such despotism are all full of holes, and especially those that come from medical men who have been bitten by the public hygiene madness, *i. e.*, by the messianic delusion. Such fanatics infest every health department in the land. They assume glibly that the whole aim of civilization is to cut down the death-rate, and to attain that end they are willing to make a sacrifice of everything else imaginable, including their own sense of humor. There is, as a matter of fact, not the slightest reason to believe that cutting down the death-rate, in itself, is of much benefit to the human race. A people with an annual rate of 40 a thousand might still produce many Huxleys and Darwins, and one with a rate of but 8 or 9 might produce nothing but Coolidges and Billy Sundays. The former probability, in truth, is greater than the latter, for a low rate does not necessarily mean that more superior individuals are surviving; it may mean only that more of the inferior are surviving, and that the next generation will be burdened by their get.

Such quackeries as Christian Science, osteopathy and chiropractic work against the false humanitarianism of the hygienists and to excellent effect. They suck in the botched, and help them on to bliss eternal. When these botched fall into the hands of competent medical men they are very likely to be patched up and turned

loose upon the world, to beget their kind. But massaged along the backbone to cure their lues, they quickly pass into the last stages, and so their pathogenic heritage perishes with them. What is too often forgotten is that nature obviously intends the botched to die, and that every interference with that benign process is full of dangers. Moreover, it is, like birth control, profoundly immoral. The chiropractors are innocent in both departments. That their labors tend to propagate epidemics and so menace the lives of all of us, as is alleged by their medical opponents—this I doubt. The fact is that most infectious diseases of any seriousness throw out such alarming symptoms and so quickly that no sane chiropractor is likely to monkey with them. Seeing his patient breaking out in pustules, or choking, or falling into a stupor, he takes to the woods at once, and leaves the business to the nearest medical man. His trade is mainly with ambulent patients; they must come to his studio for treatment. Most of them have lingering diseases; they tour all the neighborhood doctors before they reach him. His treatment, being entirely nonsensical, is in accord with the divine plan. It is seldom, perhaps, that he actually kills a patient, but at all events he keeps many a worthy soul from getting well.

Thus the multiplication of chiropractors in the Republic gives me a great deal of pleasure. It is agreeable to see so many morons getting slaughtered, and it

is equally agreeable to see so many other morons getting rich. The art and mystery of scientific medicine, for a decade or more past, has been closed to all save the sons of wealthy men. It takes a small fortune to go through a Class A medical college, and by the time the graduate is able to make a living for himself he is entering upon middle age, and is commonly so disillusioned that he is unfit for practice. Worse, his fees for looking at tongues and feeling pulses tend to be cruelly high. His predecessors charged fifty cents and threw in the pills; his own charges approach those of divorce lawyers, consulting engineers and the higher hetæræ. Even general practice, in our great Babylons, has become a sort of specialty, with corresponding emoluments. But the chiropractor, having no such investment in his training, can afford to work for more humane wages, and so he is getting more and more of the trade. Six weeks after he leaves his job at the filling-station or abandons the steering-wheel of his motor-truck he knows all the anatomy and physiology that he will ever learn in this world. Six weeks more, and he is an adept at all the half-Nelsons and left hooks that constitute the essence of chiropractic therapy. Soon afterward, having taken post-graduate courses in advertising, salesmanship and mental mastery, he is ready for practice. A sufficiency of patients, it appears, is always ready, too. I hear of no complaint from chiropractors of bad business. New ones are being turned out at a

dizzy rate, but they all seem to find the pickings easy. Some time ago I heard of a chiropractor who, having once been a cornet-player, had abandoned chiropractic in despair, and gone back to cornet-playing. But investigation showed that he was really not a chiropractor at all, but an osteopath.

The osteopaths, I fear, are finding this new competition serious and unpleasant. As I have said, it was their Hippocrates, the late Dr. Still, who invented all of the thrusts, lunges, yanks, hooks and bounces that the lowly chiropractors now employ with such vast effect, and for years the osteopaths had a monopoly of them. But when they began to grow scientific and ambitious their course of training was lengthened until it took in all sorts of tricks and dodges borrowed from the regular doctors, or resurrection men, including the plucking of tonsils, adenoids and appendices, the use of the stomach-pump, and even some of the legerdemain of psychiatry. They now harry their students furiously, and turn them out ready for anything from growing hair on a bald head to frying a patient with the *x*-rays. All this new striving, of course, quickly brought its inevitable penalties. The osteopathic graduate, having sweated so long, was no longer willing to take a case of sarcoma for $2, and in consequence he lost patients. Worse, very few aspirants could make the long grade. The essence of osteopathy itself could be grasped by any lively farm-hand or night watch-

man in a few weeks, but the borrowed magic baffled him. Confronted by the phenomenon of gastrulation, or by the curious behavior of heart muscle, or by any of the current theories of immunity, he commonly took refuge, like his brother of the orthodox faculty, in a gulp of laboratory alcohol, or fled the premises altogether. Thus he was lost to osteopathic science, and the chiropractors took him in; nay, they welcomed him. He was their meat. Borrowing that primitive part of osteopathy which was comprehensible to the meanest understanding, they threw the rest overboard, at the same time denouncing it as a sorcery invented by the Medical Trust. Thus they gathered in the garage mechanics, ash-men and decayed welter-weights, and the land began to fill with their graduates. Now there is a chiropractor at every cross-roads, and in such sinks of imbecility as Los Angeles they are as thick as bootleggers.

I repeat that it eases and soothes me to see them so prosperous, for they counteract the evil work of the so-called science of public hygiene, which now seeks to make morons immortal. If a man, being ill of a pus appendix, resorts to a shaved and fumigated longshoreman to have it disposed of, and submits willingly to a treatment involved balancing him on McBurney's spot and playing on his vertebræ as on a concertina, then I am willing, for one, to believe that he is badly wanted in Heaven. And if that same man, having

achieved lawfully a lovely babe, hires a blacksmith to cure its diphtheria by pulling its neck, then I do not resist the divine will that there shall be one less radio fan in 1967. In such matters, I am convinced, the laws of nature are far better guides than the fiats and machinations of the medical busybodies who now try to run us. If the latter gentlemen had their way, death, save at the hands of hangmen, Prohibition agents and other such legalized assassins, would be abolished altogether, and so the present differential in favor of the enlightened would disappear. I can't convince myself that that would work any good to the world. On the contrary, it seems to me that the current coddling of the half-witted should be stopped before it goes too far—if, indeed, it has not gone too far already. To that end nothing operates more cheaply and effectively than the prosperity of quacks. Every time a bottle of cancer specific goes through the mails *Homo americanus* is improved to that extent. And every time a chiropractor spits on his hands and proceeds to treat a gastric ulcer by stretching the backbone the same high end is achieved.

But chiropractic, of course, is not perfect. It has superb potentialities, but only too often they are not converted into concrete cadavers. The hygienists rescue many of its foreordained customers, and, turning them over to agents of the Medical Trust, maintained at the public expense, get them cured. Moreover, chi-

ropractic itself is not certainly fatal: even an Iowan with diabetes may survive its embraces. Yet worse, I have a suspicion that it sometimes actually cures. For all I know (or any orthodox pathologist seems to know) it *may* be true that certain malaises are caused by the pressure of vagrom vertebræ upon the spinal nerves. And it *may* be true that a hearty ex-boilermaker, by a vigorous yanking and kneading, may be able to relieve that pressure. What is needed is a scientific inquiry into the matter, under rigid test conditions, by a committee of men learned in the architecture and plumbing of the body, and of a high and incorruptible sagacity. Let a thousand patients be selected, let a gang of selected chiropractors examine their backbones and determine what is the matter with them, and then let these diagnoses be checked up by the exact methods of scientific medicine. Then let the same chiropractors essay to cure the patients whose maladies have been determined. My guess is that the chiropractors' errors in diagnosis will run to at least 95 % and that their failures in treatment will push 99 %. But I am willing to be convinced.

Where is such a committee to be found? I undertake to nominate it at ten minutes' notice. The land swarms with men competent in anatomy and pathology, and yet not engaged as doctors. There are hundreds of roomy and well-heated hospitals, with endless clinical material. I offer to supply the committee with cigars

and music during the test. I offer, further, to supply both the committee and the chiropractors with sound pre-war wet goods. I offer, finally, to give a bawdy banquet to the whole Medical Trust at the conclusion of the proceedings.

2

Criminology

The more I read the hand-books of the new criminology, the more I am convinced that it stands on a level with dogmatic theology, chiropractic and the New Thought—in brief, that it is mainly buncombe. That it has materially civilized punishment I do not, of course, deny; what I question is its doctrine as to the primary causes of crime. The average man, as every one knows, puts those causes in the domain of free will. The criminal, in his view, is simply a scoundrel who has deliberately chosen to break the law and injure his fellow-men. *Ergo,* he deserves to be punished swiftly and mercilessly. The new criminologists, in swinging away from that naïve view, have obviously gone too far in the other direction. They find themselves, in the end, embracing a determinism that is as childlike as the free will of the man in the street. Crime, as they depict it, becomes a sort of disease, either inherited or acquired by contagion, and as de-

void of moral content or significance as smallpox. The criminal is no longer a black-hearted villain, to be put down by force, but a poor brother who has succumbed to the laws of Mendel and the swinish stupidity of society. The aim of punishment is not to make him sweat, but to dissuade and rehabilitate him. In every pickpocket there is a potential Good Man. All this, gradually gaining credit, has greatly ameliorated punishments. They have not only lost their old barbaric quality; they have also diminished quantitatively. Men do not sit in prison as long as they used to; the parole boards turn them out almost as fast as the cops shove them in. The result is a public discontent that must be manifest. Whenever a criminal of any eminence comes to trial there are loud bellows against any show of mercy to him, and demands that he be punished to the limit. One never hears complaints any more that the courts are too savage; one hears only complaints that they are too soft and sentimental.

I am a congenital disbeliever in laws, and have only the most formal respect for the juridic process and its learned protagonists; nevertheless, it seems to me that there is a certain reasonableness in this unhappiness. For what it indicates, basically, is simply the inability of the average man to grasp the determinism of the new criminologists. He cannot imagine an apparently voluntary act that is determined, or even materially

conditioned, from without. He can think of crime only in terms of free will, and so thinking of it, he believes that it ought to be punished in the ancient Christian manner, *i. e.*, according to the damage flowing out of it, and not according to the temptations behind it. Certainly this is not an illogical ground to take. In all the other relations of life the average man sees free will accepted as axiomatic: he could not imagine a world in which it was denied. His religion is based squarely upon it: he knows, by the oath of his pastor, that his free acts can lift him to Heaven or cast him down to Hell. He works as a matter of free will, and is punished inevitably if he lags. His marriage, as he sees it, was a free will compact, and though he has some secret doubt, perhaps, that its issue came that way, he nevertheless orders his relations with his children on the same basis, and assumes it in judging them. In other words, he lives in a world in which free will is apparently omnipotent, and in which it is presumed even when there is no direct evidence for it. All his daily concerns are free will concerns. Well, what the criminologists ask him to do is to separate one special concern from the rest, and hand it over to determinism. They damn legislators for passing harsh laws, and judges and jailers for executing them—free will. They denounce society for "coercing" morons into crime—free will again. And then they argue that

the criminals are no more than helpless victims of circumstance, like motes dancing along a sunbeam—determinism in its purest and sweetest form.

No wonder the plain man baulks! Suppose an analogous suspension of the usual rules were attempted in some other field. Suppose it were argued seriously that free will had nothing to do with, say, the execution of contracts. Suppose an employer who failed to pay his workmen on Saturday were excused on the ground that he was the helpless victim of an evil heredity or of the stupidity of society, and thus not to be blamed for dissipating his money on Ford parts, women, foreign missions, or drink? Suppose the workman who had got out a mechanic's lien against him and sought to levy on his assets were denounced as a cruel and medieval fellow, and at odds with human progress? Certainly there would be a horrible hullabaloo, and equally certainly it would be justified. For whatever the theoretical arguments for determinism—and I am prepared to go even further in granting them than the criminologists go—, it must be plain that the everyday affairs of the world are ordered on an assumption of free will, and that it is impossible, practically speaking, to get rid of it. Society itself, indeed, is grounded upon that assumption. Imagining it as determined is possible only to professional philosophers, whose other imaginings are surely not such as to give any authority to this one. The plain man simply gives up

the effort as hopeless—and perhaps as also a bit anarchistic and un-Christian. So he is sniffish when the new criminologists begin to prattle their facile determinism, and when he observes it getting credit from the regular agents of the law he lets a loud whoop of protest. I do not believe he is naturally cruel and vindictive; on the contrary, he is very apt to be maudlingly sentimental. But sentiment is one thing, and what seems to him to be a palpably false philosophy is quite another. He no more favors letting criminals go on the ground that they can't help themselves than he favors giving money to foreign missions, or the Red Cross, or the Y. M. C. A. on the ground that it is his inescapable duty. In all of these cases he is willing to be persuaded, but in none of them is he willing to be dragooned.

Thus I fear that the criminologists of the new school only pile up trouble for themselves, and indirectly for their pets, when they attempt to revise so radically the immemorial human view of crime. If they kept quiet in the department of responsibility, they would be heard with far more attention and respect in the department of punishment, where they really have something apposite and useful to say. Their influence here, in fact, is already immense, and it works much good. Our prisons are no longer quite as sordid and demoralizing as they used to be. They are still bad enough, in all conscience, but they are not as bad as they were.

Here there is room for yet more improvement, and it cries aloud to be made. The men to work out its details are the criminologists. They have studied the effects of the prevailing punishments, and know where those punishments succeed or fail. They are happily devoid of that proud ignorance which is one of the boasts of the average judge, and they lack the unpleasant zeal of district attorneys, jail wardens and other such professional blood-letters. They need only offer the proofs that this or that punishment is ineffective to see it abandoned for something better, or, at all events, less obviously bad. But when they begin to talk of criminals in terms of pathology, even of social pathology, they speak a language that the plain man cannot understand and doesn't want to hear. He believes that crime, in the overwhelming majority of cases, is a voluntary matter, and that it ought to pay its own way and bury its own dead. He is not bothered about curing criminals, or otherwise redeeming them. He is intent only upon punishing them, and the more swiftly and certainly that business is achieved the better he is satisfied. Every time it is delayed by theorizing about the criminal's heredity and environment, and the duty that society owes to him, the plain man breaks into indignation. Only too often that indignation has been wrecked upon criminology and the criminologists. More American States, of late, have gone back to capital punishment than have abandoned it. What set the

tide to running that way was surely not mere bloodlust. It was simply a natural reaction against the doctrine that murder is mainly an accidental and unfortunate matter, and devoid of moral content, like slipping on an icy sidewalk or becoming the father of twins.

3

Eugenics

This great moral cause, like that of the criminologists, is much corrupted by blather. In none of the books of its master minds is there a clear definition of the superiority they talk about so copiously. At one time they seem to identify it with high intelligence, at another time with character, *i. e.*, moral stability, and at yet another time with mere fame, *i. e.*, luck. Was Napoleon I a superior man, as I am privately inclined to believe, along with many of the eugenists? Then so was Aaron Burr, if in less measure. Was Paul of Tarsus? Then so was Brigham Young. Were the Gracchi? Then so were Karl Marx and William Jennings Bryan.

This matter of superiority, indeed, presents cruel and ineradicable difficulties. If it is made to run with service to the human race, the eugenist is soon mired, for many men held to be highly useful are obviously second-rate, and leave third-rate progeny behind them, for example, General Grant. And if it is made

to run with intellectual brilliance and originality the troubles that loom up are just as serious, for men of that rare quality are generally felt to be dangerous, and sometimes they undoubtedly are. The case of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is in point. I suppose that no rational person to-day, not even an uncured Liberty Loan orator or dollar-a-year man, would argue seriously that Nietzsche was inferior. On the contrary, his extraordinary gifts are now unanimously admitted, save perhaps by the rev. clergy. But what of his value to the human race? And what of his eugenic fitness? It is not easy to answer these questions. Nietzsche, in fact, preached a gospel that to most human beings remains unbearable, and it will probably continue unbearable for centuries to come. Its adoption by Dr. Coolidge, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, would plunge this Republic into dreadful woe. And Nietzsche himself was a chronic invalid who died insane—the sort of wreck who, had he lived into our time, would have been a customer of chiropractors. Worse, he suffered from a malady of a scandalous nature, and of evil effects upon the sufferer's offspring. Was it good or bad luck for the world, eugenically speaking, that he died a bachelor?

But their vagueness about the exact nature of superiority is not the only thing that corrupts the fine fury of the eugenists. Even more dismaying is their

gratuitous assumption that all of the socially useful and laudable qualities (whatever they may be) are the exclusive possession of one class of men, and that the other classes lack them altogether. This is plainly not true. All that may be truthfully said of such qualities is that they appear rather more frequently in one class than in another. But they are rare in all classes, and the difference in the frequency of their occurrence between this class and that one is not very great, and of little genuine importance. If all the biologists in the United States were hanged to-morrow (as has been proposed by the pastors and newspaper editors of Mississippi) and their children with them, we'd probably still have a sufficiency of biologists in the next generation. There might not be as many as we have to-day, but there would be enough. They would come out of the families of bricklayers and politicians, bootleggers and bond salesmen. Some of them, indeed, might even come out of the families of Mississippi editors and ecclesiastics. For the supply of such men, like the supply of synthetic gin, always tends to run with the demand. Whenever it is short, the demand almost automatically augments it. Every one knows that this is true on the lower levels. Before baseball was invented there were no Ty Cobbs and Babe Ruths; now they appear in an apparently endless series. Before the Wright brothers made their first flight there were no men skilled at aviation; now there are multi-

tudes of highly competent experts. The eugenists forget that the same thing happens also on the higher levels. Whenever the world has stood in absolute need of a genius he has appeared. And though it is true that he has usually come out of the better half of humanity, it is also true that he has sometimes come out of the worse half. Beethoven was the grandson of a cook and the son of a drunkard, and Lincoln's forebears never lifted themselves above the level of village *prominenti.*

The fact is that the difference between the better sort of human beings and the lesser sort, biologically speaking, is very slight. There may be, at the very top, a small class of persons whose blood is decidedly superior and distinguished, and there may be, at the bottom, another class whose blood is almost wholly debased, but both are very small. The folks between are all pretty much alike. The baron has a great deal of peasant blood in him, and the peasant has some blood that is blue. The natural sinfulness of man is enough to make sure of that. No man in this world can ever be quite sure that he is the actual great-great-grandson of the great-great-grandfather whose memory he venerates. Thus, when the relatively superior and distinguished class ceases to be fecund (a phenomenon now visible everywhere in the world), natural selection comes to the rescue by selecting out and promoting individuals from the classes below. These indi-

viduals, in the main, are just as sound in blood as any one in the class they enter. Their sound blood has been concealed, perhaps for generations, but it has been there all the time. If Abraham Lincoln's ancestry were known with any certainty, it would probably be found to run back to manifestly able men. There are many more such hidden family-trees in the folk: the eugenists simply overlook them. They are also singularly blind to many familiar biological phenomena —for example, the appearance of mutations or sports. It is not likely that a commonplace family will produce a genius, but nevertheless it is by no means impossible: the thing has probably happened more than once. They forget, too, the influence of environment in human society. Mere environment, to be sure, cannot produce a genius, but it can certainly help him enormously after he is born. If a potential Wagner were born to a Greek bootblack in New York City tomorrow, the chances of his coming to fruition and fame would be at least even. But if he were born to an Arab in the Libyan desert or to a Fundamentalist in Rhea county, Tennessee, the chances are that he would be a total loss.

The eugenists constantly make the false assumption that a healthy degree of human progress demands a large and steady supply of absolutely first-rate men. Here they succumb to the modern craze for mass production. Because a hundred policemen, or garbage

men, or bootleggers are manifestly better than one they conclude absurdly that a hundred Beethovens would be better than one. But this is not true. The actual value of a genius often lies in his very singularity. If there had been a hundred Beethovens, the music of all of them would probably be very little known to-day, and so its civilizing effect would be appreciably less than it is. The number of first-rate men necessary to make a high civilization is really very small. If the United States could produce one Shakespeare or Newton or Bach or Michelangelo or Vesalius a century it would be doing better than any nation has ever done in history. Such culture as we have is due to a group of men so small that all of them alive at one time could be hauled in a single Pullman train. Once I went through "Who's Who in America," hunting for the really first-rate men among its 27,000 names—that is, for the men who had really done something unique and difficult, and of unquestionable value to the human race. I found 200. The rest of the 27,000 were simply respectable blanks. Many of them (though certainly not all) were creditable members of society, but only the 200 had ever done anything useful that had not been done before.

An over-production of geniuses, indeed, would be very dangerous, for though they make for progress they also tend to disturb the peace. Imagine a country housing 100 head of Aristotles! It would be as un-

happy as a city housing 100 head of Jesse Jameses. Even quasi-geniuses are a great burden upon society. There are, in the United States to-day, 1500 professional philosophers—that is, men who make their livings at the trade. The country would be far better off if all save two or three of them were driving taxicabs or serving with the Rum Fleet.

XI. LIFE UNDER BUREAUCRACY

AS the bureaucracy under which we all sweat and suffer gradually swells and proliferates in the Republic, life will become intolerable to every man save the one who has what is called influence, *i. e.*, the one who has access to the very privilege which the Fathers of the Republic hoped to abolish. It is, in fact, almost so already. The obscure and friendless man can exist unmolested in the United States only by being so obscure and friendless that the bureaucracy is quite unaware of him. The moment he emerges from complete anonymity its agents have at him with all the complex and insane laws and regulations that now crowd the statute-books, and unless he can find some more powerful person to aid him, either for cash in hand or in return for his vote, he may as well surrender himself at once to ruin and infamy. For if the job-holders don't fetch him with one law they will fetch him with another. Their one permanent purpose in life is to fetch him—by the heels if possible, and if not by the heels then at least by the ears.

Suppose, for example, he is one of the millions of Americans of foreign birth, duly naturalized but still

unaccepted socially as a full-fledged citizen. He saves his money, and decides after awhile to make a visit to his birthplace, to show off his American watch and contemplate the tombs of his anthropoid ancestors. He must have, obviously, a passport, first to get out of the United States and then to get back. Well, procuring this passport is now so onerous and complicated a matter that to such a man, with no friendly 100% American to help him, it has become practically impossible. It takes him weeks, and in the end the chances are at least 10 to 1 that he will fail. Where does the blame lie, upon the laws or upon the bureaucracy? It lies upon the bureaucracy. The laws simply say that no man who is not actually a citizen shall have the passport. But the bureaucracy goes much further: it assumes that no man at all is a citizen. The moment he is heard of he is put down as an impostor, and thereafter the burden of proving that he is not is upon him. As a practical matter, it is often impossible for him to furnish the proof. Long before the bureaucracy is satisfied, he is worn out and in despair. Unless he can find some person of influence to help him he may as well give up before he begins.

It is the invariable habit of bureaucracies, at all times and everywhere, to assume in this way that every citizen is a criminal. Their one apparent purpose, pursued with a relentless and furious diligence, is to convert the assumption into a fact. They hunt

endlessly for proofs, and, when proofs are lacking, for mere suspicions. The moment they become aware of a definite citizen, John Doe, seeking what is his right under the law, they begin searching feverishly for an excuse for withholding it from him. A successful bureaucrat is simply one who is skilled at such withholdings. A failure is one who gives Mr. Doe what he is entitled to, without resistance and at once.

I have spoken of the poor hyphenate, the special mark and victim of our American bureaucracy. But the 100% Nordic, in his different way, suffers almost as cruelly. Consider, for example, his typical adventures with the bureaucrats of the Income Tax Bureau. To begin with, they give him a blank to fill out that not one man in a hundred, assuming that he has not had long training as an accountant, can understand. Its very complexity is a triumph of bureaucracy. It is made unintelligible deliberately, and by bureaucrats of the highest professional genius, expressly hired for the business. No ordinary man, filling it out, can conceivably avoid errors. Well, the minute it is deposited in the bureaucratic machine the taxpayer is assumed officially to be a criminal. His slightest slip is proof that he has tried to swindle the government. And how do the bureaucrats deal with him? By framing a definite accusation against him, and giving him his day in court, as provided by Articles V and VI of the Bill of Rights? Not at all. That

would not be bureaucratic. They proceed by levying an additional (and often grossly excessive) tax upon him, and demanding that he pay it forthwith. He is now wholly in their net. The charge against him is no longer that he has deliberately falsified his return, which would be difficult to prove, but simply that he has failed to pay a tax lawfully levied, which is easy to prove. So he pays, and thereafter, for five or six years, he struggles to get his money back.

Not infrequently, it must be said, the bureaucrats finally give it to him. But only after a desperate resistance, made brilliant by innumerable demands for affidavits and endless conferences and hearings. All this hocus-pocus is of the very essence of the bureaucratic art and mystery. The bureaucrat, whatever his imbecilities otherwise, at least grasps clearly the central fact about government: he knows that it is the eternal enemy of the citizen. In his own eye he is an attorney employed to represent it in combats with citizens, and as a conscientious man he naturally tries to do the best he can for his client—legally if possible, but if not, then in any way feasible. His professional standing runs with his success. If he permits too many citizens to prevail against him, and so recover and preserve their rights, he loses caste, just as a surgeon loses caste when too many patients die upon the table, and his career is imperilled. The ideal bureaucrat is the one who beats the citizen every time.

Obviously, the realization of this ideal would make life almost impossible. We move steadily toward it, but so far we have not actually reached it. Many citizens, getting into the clutches of the bureaucracy, manage to escape. They achieve the business, commonly, by mustering up what is called influence. That is, they either demonstrate to the bureaucrats that they are themselves of such power and importance that oppressing them unduly would be dangerous, or they get the help of some other person of that sort. The fact explains the continued prosperity of political machines, despite the long effort to put them down. They offer even the humblest citizen an avenue of escape from the bureaucracy. In return for his vote they protect him. When the bureaucrats discover him and proceed to practice their art upon him, the machine brings pressure to bear upon their political superiors, and so hauls them off. This hauling off, as every one knows, is now the principal occupation of the inferior order of political hacks called Congressmen, and is fast becoming a crushing burden to them. In the early days of the Republic they spent their time at Washington (when not engaged in the bar-rooms and stews) debating the great problems of statecraft, often eloquently, and sometimes with what, on such modest levels of the human mind, passed for sense. But today, with the Federal laws enormously multiplied and the Federal bureaucracy glowing with professional

skill and enterprise, they are forced to devote practically all of their energies to protecting their constituents. If a Congressman failed in that duty he would return home to find half of his constituents in jail and the rest fugitives from justice. So he has had to resign statecraft to a few leaders, mainly from remote and sparsely settled States. While they carry on the business of Congress he busies himself in the departments and bureaux, rescuing his customers from the clutches of the bureaucracy.

In this benign enterprise, alas, he fails far oftener than he succeeds. Only too often, indeed, his heart is not really in it, for as a professional feeder at the public crib he is something of a bureaucrat himself, and so his sympathies naturally run with the bureaucracy rather than with its victims. Here we come upon *esprit de corps:* there is a lot of it among the scoundrels who constitute the government of the United States: whatever their stupidities otherwise, they are at least bright enough to recognize the plain fact that they form a class separate from the general run of men, with interests opposed to those of the latter, and so they stand together resolutely whenever their common advantages are menaced. In a clash, before Congress, between the aspirations of the job-holders and the common weal, the aspirations of the job-holders nearly always prevail. And in a combat before the courts between a public official and a private citi-

zen, the advantages of the public official are numerous and obvious. These advantages, rising beyond those lying naturally in friendly feeling and fellow interest, often show themselves, of late, in positive law. It was not by chance that Congress passed a statute providing that, when a Prohibition agent or other such chartered assassin is accused of murdering a citizen, the Federal district attorney of the district shall not prosecute him, but defend him. Here the job-holders of the legislative arm deliberately violated the ancient principle of equality before the law in order to give job-holders of the executive arm the full benefit of the natural prejudice in their favor among the district attorneys and judges of the judicial arm—appointees, as likely as not, of the same Anti-Saloon League which put them in their own jobs. In countless other ways the members of the prehensile oligarchy help one another to violate the common rights of the plain citizen. At every session of Congress there is a legislative assault upon the Bill of Rights for the benefit of some group or other of administrative bureaucrats, and save on very rare occasions the Federal courts always conjure up some sophistry to justify it. It causes considerable surprise, indeed, when they fail to do so. For whatever the adumbrations of theorists, the plain man is well aware that the interests of the shifting but compact group of self-seeking men constituting the so-called government of the nation are opposed, in the

main, to his own interests—in brief, that the government, in its essence, is no more and no less than a gigantic conspiracy against his well-being.

Thus democracy turns upon and devours itself. Launched upon the world as a scheme for putting down privilege, it ends by making privilege absolutely essential to a safe and peaceful existence. The citizen who is too obscure to make a Congressman or some other such professional dealer in privilege want to help him, and too weak to help himself—this citizen, under our bureaucratic jurisprudence, now has no rights at all. He is, indeed, no longer a citizen; he is a subject, and his lord is the bureaucrat. He must do whatever he is ordered to do, or face dire and devastating penalties. All of his natural daily acts become converted into crimes. It is even a crime to-day, in certain situations, for him to criticize his oppressors. If, writhing under their oppressions, he appeals to their official superiors, he usually only makes his case worse, for one bureaucrat always supports all other bureaucrats. The only man who escapes is the man with a pull. The aim of every enlightened American is to get that pull.

XII. IN THE ROLLING MILLS

ALMOST the only thing I believe in with a childlike and unquestioning faith, in this world of doubts and delusions, is free speech; nevertheless, I find it increasingly difficult to sympathize with the pedagogues who, ever and anon, are heaved out of some fresh-water college for trying to exercise it. Why? Mainly, perhaps, because I can't get rid of the suspicion that nothing a pedagogue ever says, as pedagogue, is worth hearing—that his avocation is as fatal to sense as that of an archbishop, a Federal judge, or one of the automata in Mr. Ford's great squirrel-cage at Detroit. But also, no doubt, because I am obsessed by the superstition that, assuming him miraculously to have sense, he is as much out of place in any ordinary American college as an archbishop would be in a bordello.

What ails all these bogus martyrs is a false theory of education. They seem to believe that its aim is to fill the pupil's head with a mass of provocative and conflicting ideas, to arouse his curiosity to incandescence and inspire him to inquiry and speculation—in the common phrase, to teach him how to think. But

this is surely nonsense. If education really had any such aim its inevitable effect would be to reduce nine-tenths of its victims to insanity, and to convert most of the rest into anarchists. What it seeks to do is something quite different—something, in fact, almost the opposite. It is financed by the state and by private philanthropists, not to make lunatics and anarchists, but to make good citizens—in other words, to make citizens who are as nearly like all other citizens as possible. Its ideal product is not a boy or a girl full of novel ideas but one full of lawful and correct ideas—not one who thinks, but one who believes. If it actually graduated hordes of Platos and Nietzsches it would be closed by the Department of Justice, and quite properly.

One of the most amusing things in life to a bachelor is the horror that overcomes his married friends whenever one of their children turns out to be intelligent. They feel instinctively that the phenomenon offers a challenge to their parental dignity and authority, and when the child they suspect actually *is* intelligent it certainly does. For the first thing the youngster who has succumbed to the un-Christian vice of thinking attempts is a critical examination of its surroundings, and directly in the forefront of those surroundings stand the unfortunate composers of its being. The result, only too frequently, is turmoil and disaster at the domestic hearth. Children, as every one knows, are

"ungrateful." So, argue judges and hangmen, are messieurs the condemned. Even the most intelligent agents and instruments of the Life Force are thus full of alarms when their progeny respond to Mendel's law: the very vigor and independence of judgment which they regard as their own most precious possession affrights them when it appears in their issue. I could tell some curious tales in point, but had better refrain. Suffice it to mention an old friend, extremely shrewd and realistic in all of his thinking, who was happily proud of his very intelligent daughter until, at the age of sixteen, she threatened to get a job in a shop if he sent her, as he proposed, to a finishing-school. Then he collapsed in horror, despite the plain fact that her ultimatum was an excellent proof of the intelligence that he was proud of. As man, he admired her differentiation from the mass. But as father he was made uneasy by her sharp departure from normalcy.

The great majority of American fathers, of course, have a great deal less fundamental sense than this one, who quickly recovered from his instinctive reaction, and ended, indeed, by boasting that his daughter had spurned the finishing-school at his advice. To this majority education can only mean the inculcation, by intensive torture, of all the superstitions and prejudices that they cherish themselves. When little Felix comes home to his patriotic and Christian home with

the news that the Fathers of 1776 were a gang of smugglers and profiteers, and when his sister Flora follows with the news that Moses did not write his own obituary and that the baby, Gustave, was but recently indistinguishable from a tadpole, and later on from a nascent gorilla—when such subversive and astounding doctrines are brought home from the groves of learning there ensues inevitably a ringing of firebells, with a posse on the march against some poor pedagogue.

What I maintain is simply that the vigilantes are right and the pedagogue wrong. His error lies in assuming that taxpayers lay out their hard-earned money for the breeding of traitors and atheists; taxpayers actually lay out their money for the breeding of more taxpayers like themselves. And their natural desire that this program be followed strictly is supported by the overwhelming force of the state, which loses strength and authority in direct ratio as its citizens become heretics. What holds it up is not primarily brute force, as so many theorists argue; what holds it up is the fact that, on all really essential questions, the vast majority of its citizens think exactly alike—that there is never any general doubt of the fundamental communal superstitions. Once those superstitions are seriously challenged, the whole fabric of the state begins to crumble. The true function of the pedagogue is not to attack them, but to propa-

gate them. His is a sort of priestly office. He is not paid to marshal doubts and weigh probabilities; he is paid to expound revelation. If he finds himself temperamentally unable to discharge that solemn and awful duty, then he should quit pedagogy and go into bootlegging or some other free craft. So long as he is publicly consecrated to the birch, he can no more depart from his text-book with seemliness than a Christian clergyman could depart from his sworn belief in witches.

Most of the current uproar in the colleges of the nation, I suspect, is due to a curse that I have often denounced in the past: the pestilential multiplication of Ph. D.'s. There was a time, before all the American universities began vomiting them forth by the thousand, when the whole annual produce of Ph. D.'s could be absorbed by the graduate-schools. In these graduate-schools, with all of the pupils of mature years and most of them already resolved to devote their lives to non-utilitarian and hence, by the national *mores*, subversive enterprises, it was safe enough to abandon the normal teaching process for a more or less free exchange of ideas. The teacher in such a school, having no authority to rattan his students, naturally had to submit to their cross-questioning and criticism—sometimes, when they were intelligent, an embarrassing thing. In this atmosphere the Ph. D. could function unrestrained. Be-

ing compelled to suffer the doubts and even the derision of his students, he was free on his side to bombard them with all his vagaries, however unearthly and offensive. The result was not teaching, in any true sense, but a sort of learning in common. But when the yearly production of Ph. D.'s grew so large that the graduate-schools became glutted with them, and the profiteers who support all the higher institutions of learning began to yell "Enough!", many of them had to seek other situations. Some, as every one knows, took to the chautauquas. Others sat on public commissions, and drew up reports, or set up as executive secretaries or wowsers. Yet others began practice as experts in law-suits, *i. e.*, as professional perjurers. But great hordes remained, and these presently began to filter into the undergraduate-schools. In the old days the highest academic rank that a teacher in an undergraduate-school ever aspired to was that of M. A., but to-day most of them are Ph. D.'s, and an excess of Ph. D.'s, naturally of inferior quality, has emptied into the high-schools, business colleges, correspondence schools and even grammar-schools.

It is these sick and wounded of the army of learning, I suspect, who are responsible for most of the academic Bolshevism that now fills the newspapers. Having been purged, by their superior education, of the fundamental communal superstitions—or, at all

events, of a few of them—they get revenge upon the society that ill-uses them by inoculating the children of honest Rotarians with their own odd and often nonsensical heresies. These are the fellows who, at frequent intervals, commit *scandalum magnatum* by teaching that the American patriot infantry, at Bunker Hill, ran all the way down the hill, or that General Grant was a heavy lusher, or that the Bolsheviki have not really nationalized women, or that the world is older than the Bible says, or that the Nordic Blond, biologically, is no more than a bald chimpanzee. And these are the fellows who yell that they are undone when indignant trustees give them the gate.

It seems to me that those who protest against their thus getting the gate fall into the elemental error of assuming, only too often, that an American college is the exact equivalent of a European university. It is called a university, and so they accept it as one in fact. But it is really nothing of the kind. There has been but one genuine university in the United States in our time—the Johns Hopkins under Gilman—and it turned itself into a college with frantic haste the moment he died. The college student differs from a university student in a most important way: his formal education, when he matriculates, is not completed, but simply entering upon its last stage. That is to say, he has not yet taken in the whole of that body of correct and respectable ideas which all of us must some-

how absorb before we are competent to think for ourselves—at all events, to any rational purpose and effect.

Only too often the fact is overlooked that even the most bold and talented of philosophers must suffer that stuffing before he is ready to go it alone. Aristotle, you may be sure, had the Greek alphabet rammed into him like any other Greek of his time, and studied the multiplication table, and learned the elements of Greek civics, and all that was then accepted about the nature of the Persians, the functions of the liver, and the aorist. Kant was grounded in Prussian history, the humoral pathology, and the Leibnitzian law of preëstablished harmony. Even Nietzsche had to master the grammar-book, the catechism and the Lutheran psalm-book, that he might be a good German and keep out of jail. Such training takes time, for children naturally resist it; it takes more time in America than elsewhere because our elementary-schools, in late years, devote themselves mainly to fol-de-rols borrowed from the Boy Scouts, Greenwich Village and Bernarr Macfadden. Thus the young American, when he enters college, is still only half-educated in the conventional sense. At least three of his four years are consumed in completing the lowly business of making him fit to vote, keep a checkbook accurately, and understand what is in his newspaper. Every now and then some humorist subjects a

class of freshmen to what is called a general information test. Four-fifths of them invariably turn out to be as ignorant as so many European schoolboys of ten or eleven.

Obviously, it is as imprudent to parade political heresies before such infants as it would be to lecture on obstetrics before girls of thirteen. When they are graduated at last, they are perhaps ripe for it, but when they are graduated they commonly depart the halls of learning for the bond business. The relatively few who remain seem to suffer no damage from such ideas as they encounter in the graduate-schools. At all events, there is never any complaint that they are being ruined, nor do they themselves complain that the notions of the salient anarchists are being withheld from them. Most of them, having no desire save to get their Ph. D.'s and settle down as pedagogues, are probably anæsthetic to whatever play of ideas goes on about them. A few, taking fire, afterward lecture scandalously in the prairie "universities" to which they are doomed, stir up the students to revolt against their colleagues, and so get themselves cashiered. But not many. Nor is the practical damage serious. There is always room enough for the minority of genuinely intelligent fellows in the graduate-schools whence they came. The spotlights of Babbitt do not bathe these schools, for his sons are not in them; thus they are quite free to monkey with

ideas all they please, even with red-hot ones. What I have heard in my time from eminent ornaments of this higher faculty would make interesting news for both the Comstock Society and the Department of Justice. Antinomianism is rife among them, and seems to go unchallenged. So hands remain to carry on the torch.

I don't think the boy of lively mind is hurt much by going to college. If he encounters mainly jackasses, then he learns the useful lesson that this is a jackass world. The complaints come from fellows of small humor, which is to say, from fellows whose intelligence is like a glass of beer without foam. Nor, as I have hinted, am I greatly affected—certainly not to tears—by the grievance of the young professors. Do they complain bitterly that their superiors hobble the free play of their minds, and force them to teach doctrines that they don't believe in? Then examine, some day, the doctrines that they *do* believe in. You will find chiefly bilge—Liberalism and dish-water, the puerile heresies of the farm *bloc,* all the fly-blown fallacies of yesteryear. It is the dream of every such rambunctious Dr. Birch to crash the high gates of the *Atlantic Monthly* with a devilish essay entitled "A Plea for Necking." His goatishness passes with his youth. At forty he is lecturing docilely on the Lake School.

I am unable to discern any actual passion for the truth in such victims of the educational industrial system. What moves them more often, I suspect, is

simply a desire to make a scandal and annoy their elders. The same martyr who argues that forbidding him to eulogize Lenin in class is an assault upon his sacred integrity—this same martyr is usually willing enough to teach that the late war was fought to save democracy, and that the United States played a chivalrous and honorable rôle in it. Is he heard against Fundamentalism to-day? Then why wasn't he heard against Prohibition eight or ten years ago—he or his predecessor? I don't cry him down; in his revolt, as in all revolts, there is something stimulating; he is at least not quite a clod. But his error, like that of his students, lies in mistaking the nature of the business he is engaged upon. It is a business that has very little, if anything, to do with the free play of ideas in this world. That goes on otherwhere, and on a different level. His business is to polish the rough casts turned out by an inept and humorous God, that they may be as smooth and uniform as possible, and rub one another as little as possible.

XIII. AMBROSE BIERCE

THE reputation of Ambrose Bierce, like that of Edgar Saltus, has always had an occult, artificial drug-store flavor. He has been hymned in a passionate, voluptuous, inordinate way by a small band of disciples, and he has been passed over altogether by the great majority of American critics, and no less by the great majority of American readers. Certainly it would be absurd to say that he is generally read, even by the *intelligentsia.* Most of his books, in fact, are out of print and almost unobtainable, and there is little evidence that his massive Collected Works, printed in twelve volumes between 1909 and 1912, have gone into anything even remotely approaching a wide circulation. I have a suspicion, indeed, that Bierce did a serious disservice to himself when he put those twelve volumes together. Already an old man at the time, he permitted his nostalgia for his lost youth to get the better of his critical faculty, never very powerful at best, and the result was a depressing assemblage of worn-out and fly-blown stuff, much of it quite unreadable. If he had boiled the collection down to four volumes, or

even to six, it might have got him somewhere, but as it is, his good work is lost in a morass of bad and indifferent work. I doubt that any one save the Bierce fanatics aforesaid has ever plowed through the whole twelve volumes. They are filled with epigrams against frauds long dead and forgotten, and echoes of old and puerile newspaper controversies, and experiments in fiction that belong to a dark and expired age. But in the midst of all this blather there are some pearls—more accurately, there are two of them. One consists of the series of epigrams called "The Devil's Dictionary"; the other consists of the war stories, commonly called "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians." Among the latter are some of the best war stories ever written—things fully worthy to be ranged beside Zola's "L'Attaque du Moulin," Kipling's "The Taking of Lungtungpen," or Ludwig Thoma's "Ein Bayrischer Soldat." And among the former are some of the most gorgeous witticisms in the English language.

Bierce, I believe, was the first writer of fiction ever to treat war realistically. He antedated even Zola. It is common to say that he came out of the Civil War with a deep and abiding loathing of slaughter—that he wrote his war stories in disillusion, and as a sort of pacifist. But this is certainly not believed by any one who knew him, as I did in his last years. What he got out of his services in the field was not a sentimental horror of it, but a cynical delight in it. It ap-

peared to him as a sort of magnificent *reductio ad absurdum* of all romance. The world viewed war as something heroic, glorious, idealistic. Very well, he would show how sordid and filthy it was—how stupid, savage and degrading. But to say this is not to say that he disapproved it. On the contrary, he vastly enjoyed the chance its discussion gave him to set forth dramatically what he was always talking about and gloating over: the infinite imbecility of man. There was nothing of the milk of human kindness in old Ambrose; he did not get the nickname of Bitter Bierce for nothing. What delighted him most in this life was the spectacle of human cowardice and folly. He put man, intellectually, somewhere between the sheep and the horned cattle, and as a hero somewhere below the rats. His war stories, even when they deal with the heroic, do not depict soldiers as heroes; they depict them as bewildered fools, doing things without sense, submitting to torture and outrage without resistance, dying at last like hogs in Chicago, the former literary capital of the United States. So far in this life, indeed, I have encountered no more thorough-going cynic than Bierce was. His disbelief in man went even further than Mark Twain's; he was quite unable to imagine the heroic, in any ordinary sense. Nor, for that matter, the wise. Man to him, was the most stupid and ignoble of animals. But at the same time the most amusing. Out of the spectacle of life about him he

got an unflagging and Gargantuan joy. The obscene farce of politics delighted him. He was an almost amorous connoisseur of theology and theologians. He howled with mirth whenever he thought of a professor, a doctor or a husband. His favorites among his contemporaries were such zanies as Bryan, Roosevelt and Hearst.

Another character that marked him, perhaps flowing out of this same cynicism, was his curious taste for the macabre. All of his stories show it. He delighted in hangings, autopsies, dissecting-rooms. Death to him was not something repulsive, but a sort of low comedy—the last act of a squalid and rib-rocking buffoonery. When, grown old and weary, he departed for Mexico, and there—if legend is to be believed—marched into the revolution then going on, and had himself shot, there was certainly nothing in the transaction to surprise his acquaintances. The whole thing was typically Biercian. He died happy, one may be sure, if his executioners made a botch of dispatching him—if there was a flash of the grotesque at the end. Once I enjoyed the curious experience of going to a funeral with him. His conversation to and from the crematory was superb—a long series of gruesome but highly amusing witticisms. He had tales to tell of crematories that had caught fire and singed the mourners, of dead bibuli whose mortal remains had exploded, of widows

guarding the fires all night to make sure that their dead husbands did not escape. The gentleman whose carcass we were burning had been a literary critic. Bierce suggested that his ashes be molded into bullets and shot at publishers, that they be presented to the library of the New York Lodge of Elks, that they be mailed anonymously to Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Later on, when he heard that they had been buried in Iowa, he exploded in colossal mirth. The last time I saw him he predicted that the Christians out there would dig them up and throw them over the State line. On his own writing desk, he once told me, he kept the ashes of his son. I suggested idly that the ceremental urn must be a formidable ornament. "Urn hell!" he answered. "I keep them in a cigar-box!"

There is no adequate life of Bierce, and I doubt if any will ever be written. His daughter, with some asperity, has forbidden the publication of his letters, and shows little hospitality to volunteer biographers. One of his disciples, the late George Sterling, wrote about him with great insight and affection, and another, Herman George Scheffauer, has greatly extended his fame abroad, especially in Germany. But Sterling is dead and Scheffauer seems indisposed to do him in the grand manner, and I know of no one else competent to do so. He liked mystification, and there are whole stretches of his long life that are unaccounted for. His end had mystery in it too. It

is assumed that he was killed in Mexico, but no eye-witness has ever come forward, and so the fact, if it is a fact, remains hanging in the air.

Bierce followed Poe in most of his short stories, but it is only a platitude to say that he wrote much better than Poe. His English was less tight and artificial; he had a far firmer grasp upon character; he was less literary and more observant. Unluckily, his stories seem destined to go the way of Poe's. Their influence upon the modern American short story, at least upon its higher levels, is almost nil. When they are imitated at all, it is by the lowly hacks who manufacture thrillers for the cheap magazines. Even his chief disciples, Sterling and Scheffauer, did not follow him. Sterling became a poet whose glowing romanticism was at the opposite pole to Bierce's cold realism, and Scheffauer, interested passionately in experiment, and strongly influenced by German example, has departed completely from the classicism of the master. Meanwhile, it remains astonishing that his wit is so little remembered. In "The Devil's Dictionary" are some of the most devastating epigrams ever written. "Ah, that we could fall into women's arms without falling into their hands": it is hard to find a match for that in Oscar himself. I recall another: "Opportunity: a favorable occasion for grasping a disappointment." Another: "Once: enough." A third: "Husband: one who, having dined,

is charged with the care of the plate." A fourth: "Our vocabulary is defective: we give the same name to woman's lack of temptation and man's lack of opportunity." A fifth: "Slang is the speech of him who robs the literary garbage cans on their way to the dump."

But I leave the rest to your own exploration—if you can find a copy of "The Devil's Dictionary." It was never printed in full, save in the ghastly Collected Works that I have mentioned. A part of it, under the title of "The Cynic's Word-Book," was first published as a separate volume, but it is long out of print. The other first editions of Bierce are scarce, and begin to command high premiums. Three-fourths of his books were published by obscure publishers, some of them not too reputable. He spent his last quarter of a century in voluntary immolation on a sort of burning ghat, worshiped by his small band of zealots, but almost unnoticed by the rest of the human race. His life was a long sequence of bitter ironies. I believe that he enjoyed it.

XIV. THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

SOME time ago, encountering an eminent bishop of my acquaintance, I found him suffering from a bad cold and what used to be called a fit of the vapors. The cause of his dual disorder soon became manifest. He was smarting under the slings and arrows of executive secretaries. By virtue of his lofty and transcendental office, he was naturally a man of wide influence in the land, and so they tried to enlist his interest in their multitudinous and often nefarious schemes. Every morning at 8 o'clock, just as he was rolling over for a last brief dream of Heaven, he was dragged to the telephone to hear their eloquent and lascivious night-letters, and there, on unlucky days, he stood for as much as half an hour, with his episcopal feet bare, and rage gradually mounting in his episcopal heart. Thus, on a cold morning, he had caught his cold, and thus he had acquired his bad humor.

This holy man, normally a most amiable fellow, told me that he believed the number of executive secretaries in the United States was increasing at the rate

of at least a thousand a week. He said that he knew of 30,000 in the field of Christian and moral endeavor alone. There were, he told me, 8000 more engaged in running various pacifist societies, and more than 10,000 operating organizations for the detection and scotching of Bolsheviki. He estimated that the average number of dues-paying members behind each one did not run beyond half a dozen. Nine-tenths of them, he said, were supported by two or three well-heeled fanatics. These fanatics, mainly retired Babbitts and their wives, longed to make a noise in the world, and so escape oblivion. It was the essence of the executive secretary's art and mystery to show them how to do it. Chiefly it was done by discovering bugaboos and giving chase to them. But secondarily it was done by hauling poor ecclesiastics out of bed on frosty mornings, and making them listen to endless night-letters about the woes of the Armenians, the need of intensive missionary effort in Siam, the plot of Moscow to set up soviets in Lowell, Mass., the high ideals of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the absolute necessity of deeper waterways from the Lakes to the Atlantic.

The executive secretary is relatively new in the world. Like his colleague in well-paid good works, the Y. M. C. A. secretary, he has come into being since the Civil War. Compared to him, his predecessor of ante-bellum days was an amateur and an idiot. That

predecessor had no comfortable office in a gaudy sky-scraper, he got no lavish salary, and he had no juicy expense-account. On the contrary, he paid his own way, and, especially when he worked for Abolition, which was usually, he sometimes had to take a beating into the bargain. The executive secretary of to-day, as Perlmutter would say, is something else again. He belongs to the order of live wires. He speaks the language of up-and-coming men, and is not sparing with it at the sessions of Rotary and Kiwanis. In origin, not uncommonly, a shady and unsuccessful newspaper reporter or a press-agent out of a job, he quickly becomes, by virtue of his craft, a Man of Vision. The cause that he represents for cash in hand is not merely virtuous; it is, nine times out of ten, divinely inspired. If it fails, then civilization will also fail, and the heroic doings at Chateau Thierry and Hog Island will have been in vain.

It is a good job that he has—far better than legging it on the street for some gorilla of a city editor—far, far better than traversing the sticks ahead of a No. 4 company. There is no need to get up at 7 A. M. and there is no need to fume and strain after getting up. Once three or four—or maybe even only one or two—easy marks with sound bank accounts have been snared, the new "national"—or perhaps it is "international"—association is on its legs, and all that remains is to have brilliant stationary printed, put in

an amiable and sightly stenographer, and begin deluging bishops, editors and the gullible generally with literature. The executive secretary, if he has any literary passion in him, may prepare this literature himself, but more often he employs experts to do it. Once a year he launches a drive. But it is only for publicity. The original suckers pay the freight. When they wear out the executive secretary starts a new "international" association.

Such sharks now swarm in every American city. The office-buildings are full of them. Their prosperity depends very largely upon the singular complaisance of the newspapers. The average American managing editor went through so dreadful a bath of propaganda during the late war, and was so thoroughly convinced that resisting it was a form of treason, that he is now almost unable to detect it from genuine news. Some time ago Mr. Stanley Walker, a New York journalist of sense and experience, examined a typical copy of one of the great New York dailies. He found that there were sixty-four items of local news in it—and that forty-two of them could be plainly traced to executive secretaries, and other such space-grabbers. The executive secretary, of course, does not have at his editors crudely. He seldom accompanies his item of "news" with any intimation that he is paid a good salary for planting it, and he discourages all inquiries into the actual size, aims and personnel of his organization.

Instead he commonly postures as the mere agent of men and women known to be earnest and altruistic philanthropists. These philanthropists are the suckers upon whom he feeds. They pay his salary, maintain his office, and keep up his respectability in newspaper offices. What do they get out of it themselves? In part, no doubt, an honest feeling that they are doing good: the executive secretary, in fact, has to convince them of it before he is in a position to tackle the newspapers at all. But in part, also, they enjoy the publicity—and maybe other usufructs too. In the United States, indeed, doing good has come to be, like patriotism, a favorite device of persons with something to sell. More than one great national organization for lifting up the fallen, especially in foreign lands, might be investigated to advantage. In such cases charity not infrequently gets its reward in the form of concessions.

Some time ago, sweating under this assault of executive secretaries, the editors of a great American newspaper hit upon a scheme of relief. It took the form of a questionnaire—something not seldom used, and to vast effect, by executive secretaries themselves. This questionnaire had a blank in which the executive secretary was asked to write his full name and address, and the amount of his annual salary. In other blanks there was room for putting down the total income and outgo of his association, with details of every item amounting to more than one per cent. of

the whole, and for a full list of its contributors and employees, with the amount given by every one of the former contributing more than one per cent. and the salary received by every one of the latter getting more than one per cent. This simple questionnaire cut down the mail received from executive secretaries by at least one half. Many of them did not answer at all. Many others, answering, revealed the not surprising fact that their high-sounding national and international organizations were actually small clubs of a few men and women, and that they themselves consumed most of the revenues. It is a device that might be employed effectively by other American newspapers. When the executive secretaries return their answers by mail, which is usually the case, they are under pressure to answer truthfully, for answering otherwise is using the mails to obtain money by fraud, and many worthy men are jugged at Atlanta and Leavenworth for that offense.

I suggest this plan as a means of cutting down the present baleful activity of executive secretaries, but I am not so optimistic as to believe that it could conceivably dispose of them altogether. In the higher ranks of the profession are gentlemen so skillful that they no longer send out press-matter: they make actual news. To that aristocracy belong the adept executive secretaries who run such organizations as the Anti-Saloon League. These masters of the art do not beg

for good-will in newspaper offices: they thrive upon ill-will quite as well as upon good-will. How are they to be got rid of? I am sure I don't know. In all probability the American people are doomed to suffer them forever, as they seem to be doomed to suffer Prohibition agents, revivalists, the radio and Congress.

XV. INVITATION TO THE DANCE

WHAT this grand, gaudy, unapproachable country needs and lacks is an Ingersoll. It is, indeed, a wonder that the chautauquas do not spew one forth. Certainly there must be many a jitney Demosthenes on these lonely, dyspeptic circuits who tires mightily of the standard balderdash of his trade, and longs with a great longing to throw off the white chemise of Service and give the rustics a genuinely hot show. The old tricks begin to tire the steady customers, even in the heart of the Bible Belt. What made the rural Methodists of Iowa and South Carolina breathe hard and fast at the dawn of the century now only makes them shuffle their feet and yawn behind their hands. I have spies in all such horrible regions, and their reports all agree. The yokels no longer turn out to the last paralytic to gape at stereopticon pictures of the Holy Sepulchre and the Mount of Olives, or to see a genuine Hindu from Benares in his obscene native costume, or to listen to a sweating rhetorician flog "The Future of America." They sicken of the old stuff; more, they sicken of

Service, Idealism, Vision. What ails them is that the village movie-parlor, the radio, the Ford sedan and the Ku Klux Klan have spoiled their primeval taste for simple, wholesome fare. They must have it hot now, or they don't want it at all. The master-minds of chautauqua try to meet the new demand, but cannot go all the way. They experiment gingerly with lectures on eugenics, the divorce evil, women in politics, and other such pornographic subjects, but that is not enough. They put on plays "direct from Broadway"—but have to omit the really tart ones. The horticulturists and their wives and issue pant for something more dreadful and shocking—something comparable, on the plane of ideas, to the tarring and feathering of the village fancy woman on the plane of manly sports. Their ears lie back and they hearken expectantly, and even somewhat impatiently. What they long for is a bomb.

My guess is that the one that would blow them highest, and shake the most money out of them going up and coming down, is the big black bomb of Atheism. It has not been set off in the Federal Union, formally and with dramatic effect, since July 21, 1899, when Bob Ingersoll descended into Hell. Now it is loaded again, and ready to be fired, and the chautauquan who discovers it and fires it will be the luckiest mountebank heard of in these latitudes since Col. George B. M. Harvey thrust the halo on Woodrow's

brow. For this favorite of fortune, unlike his fellows of the rustic big tops, will not have to drudge out all his days on the lonesome steppes, wrecking his stomach with fried beefsteak and saleratus biscuit and his limbs with travel on slow and bumpy trains. He will be able almost at once, like Ingersoll before him and the Rev. Billy Sunday in the last Golden Age, to horn into the big towns, or, at all events, into the towns, and there he will snore at ease of nights upon clean sheets, with his roll in his pantaloons pocket and a *Schluck* of genuine Scotch under his belt. The yokels, if they want to hear him, will have to come to Babylon in their Fords; he will be too busy and too prosperous to waste himself upon the cow-stable miasmas of the open spaces. Ingersoll, in one month, sometimes took in $50,000. It can be done again; it can be bettered. I believe that Dr. Jennings Bryan, if he had sold out God and gone over to Darwin and *Pongo pygmæus*, could have filled the largest hall in Nashville or Little Rock a month on end: he would have made the most profound sensation the country has known since the Breckenridge-Pollard case, nay, since Hannah and her amazing glands. And what Bryan could have done, any other chautauquan may now do, if not exactly in the same grand manner, then at least in a grand manner.

But this in a Christian country! *Soit!* But it was doubly a Christian country in the days of Bob the

Hell-Cat. Bob faced a Babbittry that still went to church on Sunday as automatically as a Prohibition enforcement agent holds out his hand. No machinery for distracting it from that ancient practice had yet been invented. There was no baseball. There were no automobiles to take the whole family to green fields and wet road-houses: the roads were too bad even for buggy-riding. There was no radio. There were no movies. There was no jazz. There were no Sunday comic supplements. There was no home-brewing. Moreover, a high tide of evangelistic passion was running: it was the day of Dwight L. Moody, of the Salvation Army, of prayer-meetings in the White House, of eager chapel-building on every suburban dump. Nevertheless, Bob hurled his challenge at the whole hierarchy of heaven, and within a few short years he had the Babbitts all agog, and after them the city proletariat, and then finally the yokels on the farms. He drew immense crowds; be became eminent; he planted seeds of infidelity that still sprout in Harvard and Yale. Thousands abandoned their accustomed places of worship to listen to his appalling heresies, and great numbers of them never went back. The evangelical churches, fifty years ago, were all prosperous and full of pious enterprise; the soul-snatching business was booming. Since then, despite the uproars that come from the Bible Belt, it has been declining steadily, in prosperity and in repute.

The typical American ecclesiastic of 1880 was Henry Ward Beecher, a pet of Presidents and merchant princes. The typical American ecclesiastic of 1927 is the Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton, an inmate of the stable of Hearst.

In brief, the United States, despite its gallant resistance, has been swept along, to some extent at least, in the general current of human progress and increasing enlightenment. The proofs that it resists are only too often mistaken for proofs that it hasn't moved at all. For example, there is the matter of the Klan. Superficially, its appearance appears to indicate that whole areas of the Republic have gone over to Methodist voodooism with a bang, and that civilization has been barred out of them as effectively as the Bill of Rights is barred out of a Federal court. But actually all it indicates is that the remoter and more forlorn yokels have risen against their betters—and that their uprising is as hopeless as it is idiotic. Whenever the Klan wins, the fact is smeared all over the front pages of the great organs of intelligence: when it loses, which is at least three times as often, the news gets only a few lines. The truth is that the strength of the Klan, like the strength of the Anti-Saloon League, and that of the Methodist-Baptist bloc of moron churches, the pa of both of them, has always been greatly overestimated. Even in the most barbarous reaches of the South, where every village is

bossed by a Baptist dervish, it met with vigorous challenge from the start, and there are not three Confederate States to-day in which, on a fair plebiscite, it could hope to prevail. The fact that huge hordes of Southern politicians jumped into night-shirts when it began is no proof that it was actually mighty; it is only proof that politicians are cowards and idiots. Of late all of them have been seeking to rid themselves of the tell-tale tar and feathers; they try to ride the very genuine wave of aversion and disgust as they tried to ride the illusory wave of popularity. As the Klan falls everywhere, the Anti-Saloon League tends to fall with it—and the evangelical churches are strapped tightly to both corpses.

This connection, when it was first denounced, was violently denied by the Baptist and Methodist ecclesiastics, but now every one knows that it was and is real. These ecclesiastics are responsible for the Anti-Saloon League and its swineries, and they are responsible no less for the Klan. In other words, they are responsible, directly and certainly, for all the turmoils and black hatreds that now rage in the bleak regions between the State roads—they are to blame for every witches' pot that now brews in the backwoods of the Union. They have sowed enmities that will last for years. They have divided neighbors, debauched local governments, and enormously multiplied lawlessness. They are responsible for more crime than even the

wildest foes of the saloon ever laid to its discredit, and it is crime, in the main, that is infinitely more anti-social and dangerous. They have opposed every honest effort to compose the natural differences between man and man, and they have opposed every attempt to meet ignorance and prejudice with enlightenment. Alike in the name of God, they had advocated murder and they have murdered sense. Where they flourish no intelligent and well-disposed man is safe, and no sound and useful idea is safe. They have preached not only the bitter, savage morality of the Old Testament; they have also preached its childish contempt of obvious facts. Hordes of poor creatures have followed these appalling rogues and vagabonds of the cloth down their Gadarene hill: the result, in immense areas, is the conversion of Christianity into a machine for making civilized living impossible. It is wholly corrupt, rotten and abominable. It deserves no more respect than a pile of garbage.

What I contend is that hundreds of thousands of poor simpletons are beginning to be acutely aware of the fact—that they are not quite as stupid as they usually appear to be. In other words, I believe that they tire of the obscenity. One glances at such a State as Arkansas or such a town as Jackson, Miss., and sees only a swarm of bawling Methodists; only too easily one overlooks the fact that the bawling is far from unanimous. Logic is possible, in its rudiments,

even to the *Simiidæ*. On the next step of the scale, in the suburbs, so to speak, of *Homo sapiens*, it flourishes intermittently and explosively. All that is needed to set it off is a suitable yell. The first chautauquan who looses such a yell against the True Faith will shake the Bible Belt like an earthquake, and, as they say, mop up. Half his work is already done for him. The True Faith, the only variety of the True Faith known to those hinds, is already under their rising distrust and suspicion. They look for the Ambassador of Christ, and they behold a Baptist elder in a mail-order suit, describing voluptuously the Harlot of Babylon. They yearn for consolation, and they are invited to a raid on bootleggers. Their souls reach out to the eternal mystery, and the evening's entertainment is the clubbing of a fancy woman. All they need is a leader. Christianity is sick all over this pious land, even in the South. The Christians have killed it. One blast upon a bugle horn, and the mob will be ready for the wake.

XVI. AUBADE

THE name of the man who first made a slave of fire, like the name of the original Franklin Pierce man, is unknown to historians: burrow and sweat as they will, their efforts to unearth it are always baffled. And no wonder! For isn't it easy to imagine how infamous that name must have been while it was still remembered, and how diligent and impassioned the endeavor to erase it from the tablets of the race? One pictures the indignation of the clergy when so vast an improvement upon their immemorial magic confronted them, and their herculean and unanimous struggle, first to put it down as unlawful and against God, and then to collar it for themselves. Bonfires were surely not unknown in the morning of the Pleistocene, for there were lightnings then as now, but the first one kindled by mortal hands must have shocked humanity. One pictures the news flashing from cave to cave and from tribe to tribe—out of Central Asia and then across the grasslands, and then around the feet of the glaciers into the gloomy, spook-haunted wilderness that is now Western Europe, and so across into Africa. Something new and

dreadful was upon the human race, and by the time the *Ur*-Mississippians of the Neander Valley heard of it, you may be sure, the discoverer had sprouted horns and was in the pay of the Devil.

His fate at home, though his name is unknown, presents no difficulties to adepts at public psychology. The bad boys of the neighborhood, one may safely assume, got to the scene first of all and were delighted by the show, but upon their heels came the local pastor, and in two minutes he was bawling for the *Polizei*. The ensuing trial attracted such crowds that for weeks the saber-toothed tiger (*Machærodus neogæus*) and the woolly rhinoceros (*R. antiquitatus*) roamed the wilds unmolested, feasting upon colporteurs and wandering flint peddlers. The fellow stood confronted by his unspeakable and unparalleled felony, and could only beg for mercy. Publicly and without shame, he had performed a feat never performed by man before: *ergo*, it was as plain as day that he had engaged, anteriorly, in commerce with the powers of the air. So much, indeed, was elemental logic: even a lawyer could grasp it. But *what* powers? There the clergy certainly had something to say, and what they said must have been instantly damning. They were themselves the daily familiars of all reputable powers of the air, great and small. They knew precisely what could be done and what could not be done. Their professional skill and knowledge were admitted every-

where and by all. What they could not do was thus clearly irregular and disreputable: it issued out of an unlawful transaction with fiends. Any other theory would be laughable, and in plain contempt of court. One pictures the learned judge summing up, and one pictures the headsman spitting on his hands. That night there was a head on a pole in front of the episcopal cave of the ordinary of the diocese, and more than one ambitious cave hyena (*H. spelæa*) wore himself out trying to shin up.

But the secret did not pass with the criminal. He was dead, his relatives to the third degree were sold into slavery to the Chellean heathen down the river, and it was a capital offense, with preliminary tortures, to so much as mention his name. But in his last hours, one must bear in mind, he had a spiritual adviser, to hear his confession and give him absolution for his sorcery, and that spiritual adviser, it is reasonable to assume, had just as much natural curiosity as any other clergyman. So it is not hard to imagine that he wormed the trick out of the condemned, and later on, as in duty bound, conveyed it privately to his bishop. Nor is it hard to imagine its plans and specifications becoming generally known, *sotto voce,* to the adjacent clergy, nor some ingenious holy clerk presently discovering that they could be carried out without bringing any fiends into the business. The lawful and laudable powers of the air, already sworn to the service

of Holy Church, were quite as potent: a hint from the bishop was sufficient to set them to work. And so, if there is no flaw in my reasoning, the making of fire soon became one of the high privileges and prerogatives of the sacred office, forbidden to the laity upon penalty of the stone ax, and reserved in practice for high ceremonial uses and occasions. The ordination of a new rector, I suppose, was such an occasion. The consecration of a new cave was another. And among the uses were the laying of demons, the pursuit and scotching of dragons and other monsters, the abatement of floods and cyclones, the refutation of heresies, and the management of the sun, so that day always followed night and Spring came after Winter. I dare-say fees were charged, for the clergy must live, but there was never any degradation of the new magic to sordid, secular uses. No one was allowed a fire to keep warm, and no one was allowed one to boil a bone.

It would be interesting to try to figure out, by the doctrine of probabilities, how long fire was thus reserved for sacramental purposes. The weather being, at this writing, too hot for mathematical exercises, I content myself with a guess, to wit, 10,000 years. It is probably over-moderate. The obvious usefulness of fire was certainly not enough to bring it into general use; it had to wait for the slow, tedious, extremely bloody growth of skepticism. No doubt there were

heretics, even during the first two or three millennia, who set off piles of leaves far back in the woods, gingerly, cautiously and half expecting to be potted by thunderbolts. Perhaps there were even renegade clergymen who, unsettled in their faith by contemplation of *Pithecanthropus erectus* (the remote grandfather of the *P. biblicus* of our present Christian age), threw off the sacerdotal chemise, took to flight, and started forest fires. But the odds against such antinomians, for many centuries, must have been almost as heavy as the odds against a Unitarian in Tennessee to-day. They existed, but only as outlaws, with the ax waiting for them, and Hell beyond the ax. The unanimous sentiment of decent people was against them. It was plain to every one that a world in which they went unscotched would be a world resigned to sin and shame.

Nevertheless, they continued to exist, and what is worse, to increase gradually in numbers. Even when the regular force of police was augmented by bands of volunteer snouters, organized to search out unlawful fires in the deep woods and remote deserts, there were heretics who persisted in their contumacy, and even undertook to defend it with all the devices of sophistry. At intervals great crusades were launched against them, and they were rounded up and butchered by the hundred, and even by the thousand. The ordinary method of capital punishment prevailing in those times—to wit, decapitation with fifteen or twenty

strokes of a stone ax—was found to be ineffective against such agents of the Devil, and so other and more rigorous methods were devised—chief among them, boiling to death in a huge pot set over a temple fire. More, the ordinary criminal procedure had to be changed to facilitate convictions, for the heretics were highly skilled at turning the safeguards of the law to their baleful uses. First, it was provided that a man accused of making fire should be tried, not before the judges who sat in common criminal cases, but before judges especially nominated for the purpose by the priests, or by the Anti-Fire League, an organization of citizens pledged to law and order. Then it was provided that no such prisoner should be permitted to consult counsel, or to enjoy the privilege of bail, or to call witnesses in his behalf. Finally, after all these half measures had failed, it was decided to abandon the whole sorry hocus-pocus of trial and judgment, and to hand the accused over to the public executioner at once, without any frivolous inquiry into the degree of his guilt.

This device seemed to work very well for a time. It worked very well, indeed, for nearly 5000 years. There were times during that long period when contraband fire-making seemed to be practically extinct in the world. Children grew up who had never seen a fire save in its proper place: a place of worship. Come to maturity, they begat children equally in-

nocent, and so the thing went on for generations. But always, just as the fire heresy seemed about to disappear from human memory, some outlaw in the wilds revived it. These revivals sometimes spread as rapidly as their own flames. One year there would be complete peace everywhere and a spirit of obedience to the law; the next year bonfires would suddenly sparkle in the hills, and blasphemous whispers would go round. The heretics, at such times, made great play at the young. They would lure boys into the groves along the river-bottoms and teach them how to roast chestnuts. They would send in spies disguised as Chellean serving-maids to show little girls how much easier it was to do the family washing with hot water than with cold. The constituted authorities answered such defiances with vigorous campaigns of law enforcement. Fireleggers were taken by the thousand, and put to death at great public ceremonials. But always some escaped.

In the end (or, at all events, so I work it out by the devices brought in by the new science of biometrics) enough escaped to make further proceedings against them dangerous and even impossible. No doubt it happened in what is now Southern France, in the region called the Dordogne. The fireleggers, taking to the hills, there organized a sort of outlaw state, and presently began passing laws of their own. The first of such laws, no doubt, converted fire-making from a crime

into a patriotic act: it became the principal duty of every right-thinking citizen to keep a fire burning in front of his cave. Amendments soon followed. It became a felony to eat uncooked food, or to do the family washing in cold water. It became another to put out a fire, or to advocate putting it out, or to imagine putting it out.

Thus priests were barred from that outlaw state, and it became necessary to develop a new class of men skilled in public affairs, and privy to the desires of the gods. Nature responded with politicians. Anon these politicians became adept at all the arts that have distinguished them ever since. They invented new and more rigorous laws, they imposed taxes, they broke the fireleggers to military service. One day, having drilled a large army, they marched down into the plains, tackled the hosts of the orthodox, and overcame them. The next day the priests who had led these hosts were given a simple choice: either they could admit formally that fire-making for secular purposes was now lawful and even laudable, or they could submit to being burned alive upon their own sacramental pyres. Great numbers of them went heroically to the stake, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection. The rest, retiring to their crypts and seeking divine guidance, emerged with the news that the gods were now in favor of universal fire-making. That night there was a cheerful blaze in front of every cave

for miles around, and the priests themselves sat down to a hearty banquet of roast megatherium (*M. cuvieri*). Eight thousand years later a heretic who revived the primeval pagan habit of eating raw oysters was put to death for atheism.

XVII. APPENDIX FROM MORONIA

1

Note on Technic

HAVING made of late, after a longish hiatus, two separate attempts to sit through movie shows, I can only report that the so-called art of the film still eludes me. I was not chased out either time by the low intellectual content of the pictures on display. For one thing, I am anything but intellectual in my tastes, and for another thing the films I saw were not noticeably deficient in that direction. The ideas in them were simply the common and familiar ideas of the inferior nine-tenths of mankind. They were hollow and obvious, but they were not more hollow and obvious than the ideas one encounters in the theater every day, or in the ordinary run of popular novels, or, for that matter, in the discourses of the average American statesman or divine. Rotary, hearing worse once a week, still manages to preserve its idealism and digest carbohydrates.

What afflicts the movies is not an unpalatable idea-

tional content so much as an idiotic and irritating technic. The first moving-pictures, as I remember them thirty years ago, presented more or less continuous scenes. They were played like ordinary plays, and so one could follow them lazily and at ease. But the modern movie is no such organic whole; it is simply a maddening chaos of discrete fragments. The average scene, if the two shows I attempted were typical, cannot run for more than six or seven seconds. Many are far shorter, and very few are appreciably longer. The result is confusion horribly confounded. How can one work up any rational interest in a fable that changes its locale and its characters ten times a minute? Worse, this dizzy jumping about is plainly unnecessary: all it shows is the professional incompetence of the gilded pants-pressers, decayed actors and other such half-wits to whom the making of movies seems to be entrusted. Unable to imagine a sequence of coherent scenes, and unprovided with a sufficiency of performers capable of playing them if they were imagined, these preposterous mountebanks are reduced to the childish device of avoiding action altogether. Instead of it they present what is at bottom nothing but a poorly articulated series of meaningless postures and grimaces. One sees a ham cutting a face, and then one sees his lady co-star squeezing a tear—and so on, endlessly. These mummers cannot be said, in any true sense, to act at all. They merely strike

attitudes—and are then whisked off. If, at the first attempt upon a scene, the right attitude is not struck, then all they have to do is to keep on trying until they strike it. On those terms a chimpanzee could play Hamlet, or even Juliet.

To most of the so-called actors engaged in the movies, I daresay, no other course would be possible. They are such obvious incompetents that they could no more play a rational scene, especially one involving any subtlety, than a cow could jump over the moon. They are engaged, not for their histrionic skill, but simply for their capacity to fill the heads of romantic virgins and neglected wives with the sort of sentiments that the Christian religion tries so hard to put down. It is, no doubt, a useful office, assuming that the human race must, should and will go on, but it has no more to do with acting, as an art, than being a Federal judge has with preserving the Constitution. The worst of it is that the occasional good actor, venturing into the movies, is brought down to the common level by the devices thus invented to conceal the incompetence of his inferiors. It is quite as impossible to present a plausible impersonation in a series of unrelated (and often meaningless) postures as it would be to make a sensible speech in a series of college yells. So the good actor, appearing in the films, appears to be almost as bad as the natural movie ham. One sees him only as one sees a row of telegraph

poles, riding in a train. However skillful he may be, he is always cut off before, by any intelligible use of the devices of his trade, he can make the fact evident.

In one of the pictures I saw lately a principal actor was George Bernard Shaw. The first scene showed him for fifteen or twenty seconds continuously, and it was at once plain that he had a great deal of histrionic skill —far more, indeed, than the average professional actor. He was seen engaged in a friendly argument with several other dramatists, among them Sir James M. Barrie and Sir Arthur Wing Pinero. Having admired all these notorious men for many years, and never having had the honor of meeting or even witnessing them, I naturally settled down with a grateful grunt to the pleasure of feasting my eyes upon them. But after that first scene all I saw of Shaw was a series of fifteen or twenty maddening flashes, none of them more than five seconds long. He would spring into view, leap upon Barrie or Pinero—and then disappear. Then he would spring back, his whiskers bristling—and disappear again. It was as maddening as the ring of the telephone.

There is, of course, a legitimate use for this off-again-on-again device in the movies: it may be used, at times, very effectively and even intelligently. The beautiful heroine, say, is powdering her nose, preparing to go out to her fatal dinner with her libidinous

boss. Suddenly there flashes through her mind a prophylactic memory of the Sunday-school in her home town far away. An actress on the stage, with such a scene to play, faces serious technical difficulties: it is very hard for her—that is, it has been hard since Ibsen abolished the soliloquy—to convey the exact revolutions of her conscience to her audience. But the technic of the movies makes it very easy—in fact, so easy that it requires no skill at all. The director simply prepares a series of scenes showing what is going through the heroine's mind. There is the church on the hill, with the horde of unhappy children being driven into its basement by the town constable. There is the old maid teacher expounding the day's Golden Text, II Kings, II, 23–24. There is a flash of the two she-bears "taring" the "forty and two" little children. There is the heroine, in ringlets, clapping her hands in dutiful Presbyterian glee. There is a flash of the Sunday-school superintendent, his bald head shining, warning the scholars against the sins of simony, barratry and adultery. There is the collection, with the bad boy putting in the suspenders' button. There is the flash showing him, years later, as a bank president.

All this is ingenious. More, it is humane, for it prevents the star trying to act, and so saves the spectators pain. But it is manifestly a poor substitute for

acting on the occasions when acting is actually demanded by the plot—that is, on the occasions when there must be cumulative action, and not merely a series of postures. Such occasions give rise to what the old-time dramatic theorists called *scènes à faire*, which is to say, scenes of action, crucial scenes, necessary scenes. In the movies they are dismembered, and so spoiled. Try to imagine the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet" in a string of fifty flashes—first Romeo taking his station and spitting on his hands, then Juliet with her head as big as a hay-wagon, then the two locked in a greasy kiss, then the Nurse taking a drink of gin, then Romeo rolling his eyes, and so on. If you can imagine it, then you ought to be in Hollywood, dodging bullets and amassing wealth.

If I were in a constructive mood I'd probably propose reforms, but that mood, I regret to say, is not on me. In any case, I doubt that proposing reforms would do any good. For this idiotic movie technic, as I have shown, has its origin in the incompetence of the clowns who perform in the great majority of movies, and it would probably be impossible to displace them with competent actors, for the customers of the movie-parlors appear to love them, and even to admire them. It is hard to believe, but it is obviously so. A successful movie mime is probably the most admired human being ever seen in the world. He is

admired more than Napoleon, Lincoln or Beethoven; more, even, than Coolidge. The effects of this adulation, upon the mime himself and especially upon his clients, ought to be given serious study by competent psychiatrists, if any can be found. For there is nothing more corrupting to the human psyche, I believe, than the mean admiration of mean things. It produces a double demoralization, intellectual and spiritual. Its victim becomes not only a jackass, but also a bounder. The movie-parlors, I suspect, are turning out such victims by the million: they will, in the long run, so debauch the American proletariat that it will begin to put Coolidge above Washington, and Peaches Browning above Coolidge.

Meanwhile, they are ruining the ancient and noble art of the dramatist—an art that has engaged the talents of some of the greatest men the world has ever seen. And they are, at the same time, ruining the lesser but by no means contemptible art of the actor. It is no advantage to a movie ham to be a competent actor; on the contrary, it is a handicap. If he tried to act, as acting has been understood since the days of Æschylus, his director would shut him off instanter: what is wanted is simply aphrodisiacal posturing. And if, by any chance, his director were drunk and let him run on, the vast majority of movie morons would probably rush out of the house, bawling that the film was pain and cheap, and that they had been swindled.

2

Interlude in the Socratic Manner

Having completed your æsthetic researches at Hollywood, what is your view of the film art now?

I made no researches at Hollywood, and was within the corporate bounds of the town, in fact, only on a few occasions, and then for only a few hours. I spent my time in Los Angeles, studying the Christian pathology of that great city. When not so engaged I mainly devoted myself to quiet guzzling with Joe Hergesheimer, Jim Quirk, Johnny Hemphill, Jim Tully, Walter Wanger and other such literati. For the rest, I visited friends in the adjacent deserts, some of them employed in the pictures and some not. They treated me with immense politeness. With murderers as thick in the town as evangelists, nothing would have been easier than to have had me killed, but they let me go.

Did any of them introduce you to the wild night-life of the town?

The wildest night-life I encountered was at Sister Aimée McPherson's tabernacle. I saw no wildness among the movie-folk. They seemed to me, in the main, to be very serious and even gloomy people. And no wonder, for they are worked like Pullman porters or magazine editors. When they are engaged in posturing for a film and have finished their day's

labor they are far too tired for any recreation requiring stamina. I encountered but two authentic souses in three weeks. One was a cowboy and the other was an author. I heard of a lady getting tight at a party, but I was not present. The news was a sensation in the town. Such are the sorrows of poor mummers: their most banal peccadilloes are magnified into horrors. Regard the unfortunate Chaplin. If he were a lime and cement dealer his latest divorce case would not have got two lines in the newspapers. But, as it was, he was placarded all over the front pages because he had had a banal disagreement with one of his wives. The world hears of such wild, frenzied fellows as Tully, and puts them down as typical of Hollywood. But Tully is not an actor; he eats actors. I saw him devour half a dozen of them on the half-shell in an hour. He wears a No. 30 collar and has a colossal capacity for wine-bibbing; I had to call up my last reserves to keep up with him. But the typical actor is a slim and tender fellow. What would be a mere apéritif for Tully or me would put him under the table, yelling for his pastor.

So you caught no glimpses of immorality?

Immorality? Oh, my God! Hollywood, despite the smell of patchouli and rattle of revolver fire, seemed to me to be one of the most respectable towns in America. Even Baltimore can't beat it. The notion that

actors are immoral fellows is a delusion that comes down to us from Puritan days, just as the delusion that rum is a viper will go down to posterity from our days. There is no truth in it. The typical actor, at least in America, is the most upright of men: he always marries the girl. How many actors are bachelors? Not one in a thousand. The divorce rate is high among them simply because the marriage rate is so high. An actor, encountering a worthy girl, leaps from the couch to the altar almost as fast as a Baptist leaps from the altar to the couch. It is his incurable sentimentality that fetches him: if he was not born a romantic he is not an actor. Worse, his profession supports his natural weakness. In plays and movies he always marries the girl in the end, and so it seems to him to be the decent thing to do it in his private life. Actors always copy the doings of the characters they impersonate: no Oscar was needed to point out that nature always imitates art. I heard, of course, a great deal of gossip in Los Angeles, but all save a trivial part of it was excessively romantic. Nearly every great female star, it appeared, was desperately in love, either with her husband or with some pretty and well-heeled fellow, usually not an actor. And every male star was mooning over some coy and lovely miss. I heard more sweet love stories in three weeks than I had heard in New York in the previous thirty years.

The whole place stank of orange-blossoms. Is honest love conducive to vice? Then one may argue that it is conducive to delirium tremens to be a Presbyterian elder. One of the largest industries in Hollywood is that of the florists. Next comes that of the traffickers in wedding silver. One beautiful lady star told me that buying such presents cost her $11,000 last year.

But the tales go round. Is there no truth in them at all?

To the best of my knowledge and belief, none. They are believed because the great masses of the plain people, though they admire movie actors, also envy them, and hence hate them. It is the old human story. Why am I hated by theologians? It is because I am an almost unparalleled expert in all branches of theology. Whenever they tackle me, my superior knowledge and talent floor them. In precisely the same way I hate such fellows as the movie Salvini, Jack Gilbert. Gilbert is an amiable and tactful young man, and treats me with the politeness properly due to my years and learning. But I heard in Culver City that no less than two thousand head of women, many of them rich, were mashed on him. Well, I can recall but fifteen or twenty women who have ever showed any sign of being flustered by me, and not one of them, at a forced sale, would have realized $200. Hence I hate Gilbert, and would rejoice unaffectedly to see him taken in some scandal that would stagger

humanity. If he is accused of anything less than murdering his wife and eight children I shall be disappointed.

Then why do you speak for Mr. Chaplin?

Simply because he is not a handsome dog, as Gilbert is. The people who hate him do so because he is rich. It is the thought that his trouble will bust him that gives them delight. But I have no desire for money and so his prosperity does not offend me. I always have too much money; it is easy to get in New York, provided one is not a professing Christian. Gilbert, I suppose, is rich too; he wears very natty clothes. But it is not his wealth that bothers me: it is those two thousand head of women.

So, failing researches, you continue ignorant of the film art?

Ignorant? What a question! How could any man remain ignorant of the movies after three weeks in Los Angeles? As well continue ignorant of laparotomy after three weeks in a hospital sun-parlor! No, I am full of information about them, some of it accurate, for I heard them talked day and night, and by people who actually knew something about them. There was but one refuge from that talk, and that was La McPherson's basilica. Moreover, I have hatched some ideas of my own.

As for example?

That the movie folks, in so far as they are sentient

at all, are on the hooks of a distressing dilemma. They have built their business upon a foundation of morons, and now they are paying for it. They seem to be unable to make a presentable picture without pouring out tons of money, and when they have made it they must either sell it to immense audiences of half-wits, or go broke. There seems to be very little ingenuity and resourcefulness in them. They are apparently quite unable, despite their melodramatic announcements of salary cuts, to solve the problem of making movies cheaply, and yet intelligently, so that civilized persons may visit the movie-parlors without pain. But soon or late some one will have to solve it. Soon or late the movies will have to split into two halves. There will be movies for the present mob, and there will be movies for the relatively enlightened minority. The former will continue idiotic; the latter, if competent men to make them are unearthed, will show sense and beauty.

Have you caught the scent of any such men?

Not yet. There are some respectable craftsmen in Hollywood. (I judged them by their talk: I have not seen many of their actual pictures.) They tackle the problems of their business in a more or less sensible manner. They have learned a lot from the Germans. But I think it would be stretching a point to say that there are any artists among them—as yet. They are adept, but not inspired. The movies need a first-rate

artist—a man of genuine competence and originality. If he is in Hollywood to-day, he is probably bootlegging, running a pants pressing parlor, or grinding a camera crank. The movie magnates seek him in literary directions. They pin their faith to novelists and playwrights. I presume to believe that this is bad medicine. The fact that a man can write a competent novel is absolutely no reason for assuming that he can write a competent film. The two things are as unlike as Pilsner and coca-cola. Even a sound dramatist is not necessarily a competent scenario-writer. What the movies need is a school of authors who will forget all dialogue and description, and try to set forth their ideas in terms of pure motion. It can be done, and it will be done. The German, Dr. Murnau, showed the way in certain scenes of "The Last Laugh." But the American magnates continue to buy bad novels and worse plays, and then put over-worked hacks to the sorry job of translating them into movies. It is like hiring men to translate college yells into riddles. Æschylus himself would have been stumped by such a task.

When do you think the Shakespeare of the movies will appear? And where will he come from?

God knows. He may even be an American, as improbable as it may seem. One thing, only, I am sure of: he will not get much for his masterpieces. He will have to give them away, and the first manager who

puts them on will lose money. The movies to-day are too rich to have any room for genuine artists. They produce a few passable craftsmen, but no artists. Can you imagine a Beethoven making $100,000 a year? If so, then you have a better imagination than Beethoven himself. No, the present movie folk, I fear, will never quite solve the problem, save by some act of God. They are too much under the heel of the East Side gorillas who own them. They think too much about money. They have allowed it to become too important to them, and believe they couldn't get along without it. This is an unfortunate delusion. Money is important to mountebanks, but not to artists. The first really great movie, when it comes at last, will probably cost less than $5000. A true artist is always a romantic. He doesn't ask what the job will pay; he asks if it will be interesting. In this way all the loveliest treasures of the human race have been fashioned —by careless and perhaps somewhat foolish men. The late Johann Sebastian Bach, compared to a movie star with nine automobiles, was simply a damned fool. But I cherish the feeling that a scientific inquiry would also develop other differences between them.

Are you against the star system?

I am neither for it nor against it. A star is simply a performer who pleases the generality of morons better than the average. Certainly I see no reason why

such a performer should not be paid a larger salary than the average. The objection to swollen salaries should come from the stars themselves—that is, assuming them to be artists. The system diverts them from their proper business of trying to produce charming and amusing movies, and converts them into bogus society folk. What could be more ridiculous? And pathetic? I go further: it is tragic. As I have said in another place, nothing is more tragic in this world than for otherwise worthy people to meanly admire and imitate mean things. One may have some respect for the movie lady who buys books and sets up as an intellectual, for it is a creditable thing to want to be (or even simply to want to appear) well-informed and intelligent. But I can see nothing worthy in wanting to be mistaken for the president of a bank. Artists should sniff at such dull drudges, not imitate them. The movies will leap ahead the day some star in Hollywood organizes a string quartette and begins to study Mozart.

3

Valentino

By one of the chances that relieve the dullness of life and make it instructive, I had the honor of dining with this celebrated gentleman in New York, a week or so before his fatal illness. I had never met him be-

fore, nor seen him on the screen; the meeting was at his instance, and, when it was proposed, vaguely puzzled me. But soon its purpose became clear enough. Valentino was in trouble, and wanted advice. More, he wanted advice from an elder and disinterested man, wholly removed from the movies and all their works. Something that I had written, falling under his eye, had given him the notion that I was a judicious fellow. So he requested one of his colleagues, a lady of the films, to ask me to dinner at her hotel.

The night being infernally warm, we stripped off our coats, and came to terms at once. I recall that he wore suspenders of extraordinary width and thickness—suspenders almost strong enough to hold up the pantaloons of Chief Justice Taft. On so slim a young man they seemed somehow absurd, especially on a hot Summer night. We perspired horribly for an hour, mopping our faces with our handkerchiefs, the table napkins, the corners of the table-cloth, and a couple of towels brought in by the humane waiter. Then there came a thunder-storm, and we began to breathe. The hostess, a woman as tactful as she is charming, disappeared mysteriously and left us to commune.

The trouble that was agitating Valentino turned out to be very simple. The ribald New York papers were full of it, and that was what was agitating him. Some time before, out in Chicago, a wandering reporter had discovered, in the men's wash-room of a gaudy

hotel, a slot-machine selling talcum-powder. That, of course, was not unusual, but the color of the talcum-powder was. It was pink. The news made the town giggle for a day, and inspired an editorial writer on the eminent Chicago *Tribune* to compose a hot weather editorial. In it he protested humorously against the effeminization of the American man, and laid it lightheartedly to the influence of Valentino and his sheik movies. Well, it so happened that Valentino, passing through Chicago that day on his way east from the Coast, ran full tilt into the editorial, and into a gang of reporters who wanted to know what he had to say about it. What he had to say was full of fire. Throwing off his 100% Americanism and reverting to the *mores* of his fatherland, he challenged the editorial writer to a duel, and, when no answer came, to a fist fight. His masculine honor, it appeared, had been outraged. To the hint that he was less than he, even to the extent of one half of one per cent., there could be no answer save a bath of blood.

Unluckily, all this took place in the United States, where the word honor, save when it is applied to the structural integrity of women, has only a comic significance. One hears of the honor of politicians, of bankers, of lawyers, even of the honor of the United States itself. Everyone naturally laughs. So New York laughed at Valentino. More, it ascribed his high dudgeon to mere publicity-seeking: he seemed a vulgar

movie ham seeking space. The poor fellow, thus doubly beset, rose to dudgeons higher still. His Italian mind was simply unequal to the situation. So he sought counsel from the neutral, aloof and aged. Unluckily, I could only name the disease, and confess frankly that there was no remedy—none, that is, known to any therapeutics within my ken. He should have passed over the gibe of the Chicago journalist, I suggested, with a lofty snort—perhaps, better still, with a counter gibe. He should have kept away from the reporters in New York. But now, alas, the mischief was done. He was both insulted and ridiculous, but there was nothing to do about it. I advised him to let the dreadful farce roll along to exhaustion. He protested that it was infamous. Infamous? Nothing, I argued, is infamous that is not true. A man still has his inner integrity. Can he still look into the shaving-glass of a morning? Then he is still on his two legs in this world, and ready even for the Devil. We sweated a great deal, discussing these lofty matters. We seemed to get nowhere.

Suddenly it dawned upon me—I was too dull or it was too hot for me to see it sooner—that what we were talking about was really not what we were talking about at all. I began to observe Valentino more closely. A curiously naïve and boyish young fellow, certainly not much beyond thirty, and with a disarming air of inexperience. To my eye, at least, not hand-

some, but nevertheless rather attractive. There was an obvious fineness in him; even his clothes were not precisely those of his horrible trade. He began talking of his home, his people, his early youth. His words were simple and yet somehow very eloquent. I could still see the mime before me, but now and then, briefly and darkly, there was a flash of something else. That something else, I concluded, was what is commonly called, for want of a better name, a gentleman. In brief, Valentino's agony was the agony of a man of relatively civilized feelings thrown into a situation of intolerable vulgarity, destructive alike to his peace and to his dignity—nay, into a whole series of such situations. It was not that trifling Chicago episode that was riding him; it was the whole grotesque futility of his life. Had he achieved, out of nothing, a vast and dizzy success? Then that success was hollow as well as vast—a colossal and preposterous nothing. Was he acclaimed by yelling multitudes? Then every time the multitudes yelled he felt himself blushing inside. The old story of Diego Valdez once more, but with a new poignancy in it. Valdez, at all events, was High Admiral of Spain. But Valentino, with his touch of fineness in him—he had his commonness, too, but there was that touch of fineness—Valentino was only the hero of the rabble. Imbeciles surrounded him in a dense herd. He was pursued by women—but what women! (Consider the sordid comedy of his two mar-

riages—the brummagem, star-spangled passion that invaded his very death-bed!) The thing, at the start, must have only bewildered him. But in those last days, unless I am a worse psychologist than even the professors of psychology, it was revolting him. Worse, it was making him afraid.

I incline to think that the inscrutable gods, in taking him off so soon and at a moment of fiery revolt, were very kind to him. Living, he would have tried inevitably to change his fame—if such it is to be called—into something closer to his heart's desire. That is to say, he would have gone the way of many another actor—the way of increasing pretension, of solemn artiness, of hollow hocus-pocus, deceptive only to himself. I believe he would have failed, for there was little sign of the genuine artist in him. He was essentially a highly respectable young man, which is the sort that never metamorphoses into an artist. But suppose he had succeeded? Then his tragedy, I believe, would have only become the more acrid and intolerable. For he would have discovered, after vast heavings and yearnings, that what he had come to was indistinguishable from what he had left. Was the fame of Beethoven any more caressing and splendid than the fame of Valentino? To you and me, of course, the question seems to answer itself. But what of Beethoven? He was heard upon the subject, *viva voce*, while he lived, and his answer survives, in all the freshness of its profane

eloquence, in his music. Beethoven, too, knew what it meant to be applauded. Walking with Goethe, he heard something that was not unlike the murmur that reached Valentino through his hospital window. Beethoven walked away briskly. Valentino turned his face to the wall.

Here, after all, is the chiefest joke of the gods: that man must remain alone and lonely in this world, even with crowds surging about him. Does he crave approbation, with a sort of furious, instinctive lust? Then it is only to discover, when it comes, that it is somehow disconcerting—that its springs and motives offer an affront to his dignity. But do I sentimentalize the perhaps transparent story of a simple mummer? Then substitute Coolidge, or Mussolini, or any other poor devil that you can think of. Substitute Shakespeare, or Lincoln, or Goethe, or Beethoven, as I have. Sentimental or not, I confess that the predicament of poor Valentino touched me. It provided grist for my mill, but I couldn't quite enjoy it. Here was a young man who was living daily the dream of millions of other young men. Here was one who was catnip to women. Here was one who had wealth and fame. And here was one who was very unhappy.

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